







Exploring perceptions of Malaysian primary school teachers towards the implementation of common European framework reference of language-aligned English textbooks

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ABSTRACT

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This study explored the perception of Malaysian teachers of the implementation of CEFR-aligned English textbooks in national schools. A mixed-methods research design was applied. 42 English teachers as participants from Malaysia's three federal territories: Kuala Lumpur, Labuan, and Putrajaya participated in this study. Questionnaire and semi-structured interview sessions were used for data collection. The data were analyzed using NVIVO and SPSS. The findings suggest that the CEFR-aligned textbooks are more attractive and expose students to diverse cultural and linguistic contexts. KSSR textbooks should not be abandoned entirely as they offer less attractive but narrower-scope activities. The study's findings are intended to provide valuable insights to the Ministry of Education, school administrators, and teachers allowing for a better understanding of the effectiveness and suitability of the current English textbook in use. The findings revealed that CEFR-aligned curriculum is moving in a positive direction and readiness for its implementation requires further improvements.

Contribution/Originality: The present study is novel as it examines teacher perceptions across Malaysia's three federal territories and compares CEFR-aligned and KSSR textbooks across diverse primary school contexts. It presents region-specific insights into textbook efficacy, contextual relevance and implementation issues topics that remain under examined in CEFR-aligned studies in Malaysia using a mixed-methods design.

1. INTRODUCTION

The use of the present CEFR advanced level-aligned English textbooks in national schools in Malaysia has been a concern among teachers and policymakers (Nawawi, Zuhaimi, Sabu, Mahamud, & Nasir, 2021; Ng & Ahmad, 2021; Zulkipli & Nasri, 2024). The CEFR is a universal scale for language proficiency levels and is a guide to language teaching and learning. Primary school students who complete a six-year educational program are not proficient at speaking a second language fluently compared to students in foreign schools. The Ministry of Education has adopted the CEFR framework for English language teaching syllabus in the English curriculum and central authorities have designed and implemented English textbooks and teaching materials based on the CEFR levels and descriptors (Shak, Albakri, Tahir, & Adam, 2021). These textbooks are designed to help students develop, with the textbook, their listening, speaking, reading and writing skills while corresponding to each CEFR level

(Lee, Kassim, & Bakar, 2022). The ministry has also reviewed the education plan (2013-2025) and made changes to improve and strengthen the structure for second language learning. Based on the Malaysia Education Blueprint (2015-2025) which states the vitality to ensure every child is proficient in the Bahasa Malaysia and English languages, furthermore, the blueprint indicates the encouragement of learning an additional language.

The Malaysian national primary schools system comprises Malay-medium National Schools (*Sekolah Kebangsaan*, SK) and non-Malay-medium National-type Schools (*Sekolah Jenis Kebangsaan*, SJK) also known as “vernacular schools”. The vernacular schools are further divided into national-type schools (Chinese) (*Sekolah Jenis Kebangsaan (Cina)*, SJK(C)) which are Mandarin-medium and simplified Chinese writing and national-type school (Indian) (*Sekolah Jenis Kebangsaan (Tamil)*, SJK (T)), Tamil-medium. While teachers in SK are more prone to converse and communicate in Bahasa Malaysia compared to English in SJKC the teachers will communicate and converse in the Mandarin language and for the SJKT the teachers will be conversing in the mother tongue and which is Tamil. The subject teachers teaching and delivering the English language can help students to improve not only in speaking proficiency in the English language but also understand the text and information in the reading materials, to relate and express the thoughts and opinions clearly without hesitation and to respond to critical thinking problems.

All three types of schools have employed the English Language Syllabus for Primary Schools since 1983. Based upon the Kurikulum Bersepadu Sekolah Rendah (KBSR) which translates to Integrated Curriculum for Primary Schools in Malaysia, it was introduced by the Ministry of Education Malaysia in 1983 as part of a major education reform to make learning in primary schools more holistic, student-centered, and skills-oriented. This approach to the English curriculum for primary schools is designed to provide learners with a strong foundation in the English language. The achievement rate in the English papers shows better performance based upon the announcements by the Primary School Assessment Examination Result in 2019. However, this does not determine the actual performance of the student’s ability as examinations and tests only provide results that students can decipher and understand in text-related questions. Since English is the second language in our country, it is vital that students can comprehend, express, write and relate confidently and communicate effectively or fluently. Fluency and deep understanding of the language are crucial as English isn’t just a means of communicating within the society, but it also provides the students with livelihoods and opportunities in seeking jobs.

Therefore, the Malaysian education system integrated the CEFR into the English syllabus to enhance English proficiency among students. According to Kassim and Hashim (2023) they mention in their study that teaching CEFR in the education system can produce students who speak English well. Hadi and Shah (2020) stated that the CEFR-aligned curriculum will help students to learn the language effectively and thus can face new challenges in this rapidly changing world. Therefore, to enhance the English standard, many countries do different things including having the CEFR-aligned English textbooks with more international content (Curriculum Development Division, 2016).

Previous studies also showed that there is a high possibility that acquiring English helps the community to lead a better life and future. The language itself does not only help to empower the community but also aids in the development and growth of the country (Aman, 2021; Hanlen, 2010; Nawawi et al., 2021; Ng & Ahmad, 2021; Sahib & Stapa, 2021). Nevertheless, there is still a significant number of teachers who doubt the relevance of the current CEFR texts in providing meaningful learning experiences for students of diverse backgrounds despite all the results and achievements shown in the English examination. Abdul Rahim and Jalalian Daghigh (2020) indicated that many teachers find it difficult to use these CEFR-aligned textbooks in the classroom, particularly for those students who have not been exposed to the outside world. Similarly, Aziz, Rashid, and Zainudin (2018) and Khair and Shah (2021) in their study mentioned that teachers’ perceptions towards using these locally produced textbooks were very negative and preferred to use the existing local textbooks. The Malaysia Blueprint of Education (2015-2025) has a definite and strong emphasis on proficiency in English. Therefore, the current study aimed to explore

the perception of teachers toward the implementation of the current CEFR-aligned English textbooks in national schools in Malaysia.

1.1. Problem Statement

For teachers, textbooks are an important reference in teaching courses. It helps the teachers in planning and delivering the lessons and in adopting diverse approaches to cater to different types of learners and respond to different learning styles simultaneously (Cabual, 2021). However, the main question is as follows: Are they (textbooks) sufficient? It is worth raising this concern if the same English language textbooks are used across the different school systems for National Primary Schools and National Type Primary Schools while adopting one curriculum for these systems, namely Standard Curriculum for Primary Schools (Kurikulum Standard Sekolah Rendah (KSSR)). On the other hand, the question remains as to whether the textbooks reformed and enhanced with the CEFR are offering more relevant content to 21st century issues within the KSSR syllabus? However, there are some challenges that exist for adopting CEFR to be taught. Among the main issues that hinder the use of the CEFR are the teachers' mastery of the English language, the teachers' resistance to the inclusion of the CEFR, a lack of CEFR experts who are equally or more qualified than university researchers in developing the local CEFR-aligned textbooks and a lack of training (Nurul Farehah Mohamad Uri & Abd Aziz, 2018).

This study is to investigate and understand the usefulness and effectiveness of the textbooks used by teachers in the Malaysian primary national, Chinese and Tamil schools in the English language classroom. Textbooks have an influence within a classroom setting because they provide and enable teachers to teach effectively. John (2001) and Zulkiply and Nasri (2024) indicated that "a majority of teachers use textbooks as their principal curriculum guide and source of lessons". With the English textbooks provided and used which are aligned with the KSSR syllabus after being improved and implemented in 2010, Malaysian students in primary school are generally struggling with ESL reading due to the text selections used in the current English textbooks based on the CEFR syllabus implemented in 2018 (Azmi et al., 2020; Puteh, Zin, & Ismail, 2016; Thirunavukarasu & Harun, 2021).

The students and teachers find the present English textbooks challenging to teach because most of the content in the English textbooks deals with foreign cultural characteristics, particularly in their comprehension. One of the challenges is teacher training to use CEFR for classroom delivery which involves professional development (such as Ministry of Education endorsement in Malaysia for teachers to use this textbook at CEFR levels). Another is getting support from the MOE (Nawai & Said, 2020). Yet another challenge is whether the schools have the needed resources and support to use the CEFR-aligned English textbooks in terms of sufficient funds and training sessions for the teachers involved (Zulkiply & Nasri, 2024).

With the above-mentioned challenges, although the implementation of the current CEFR-aligned English textbooks is not ideal and has not reached its full potential in national schools in Malaysia, it does create opportunities for enhancing the quality of English language teaching and learning. Thus, this study was conducted to investigate the perception of teachers toward the implementation of the current CEFR-aligned English textbooks in primary national schools in Malaysia. The research questions that guided the study were as follows: (1) What are teachers' opinions on teaching and delivering lessons using the KSSR English textbook compared to the CEFR English textbook, particularly regarding which is easier for students to follow and grasp? (2) Which textbooks are more likely to engage primary school students and maintain their interest in the English language? (3) What are the teachers' responses to the changes in the English syllabus?

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

The existing literature has examined the use of English textbooks in Malaysian national and national-type schools. Research has examined how teachers perceive and experience challenges when using CEFR-aligned English textbooks (Seng & Hashim, 2006; Tee et al., 2018). Studies show that the new textbooks demonstrate a

major departure from old KSSR textbooks because they focus on advancing students' complete English proficiency instead of simply teaching grammar and vocabulary (Azman, 2016; Mohd Sallehhudin & Mohd Uri, 2019). Teachers note that CEFR-aligned textbooks match modern communicative needs and offer students practical language use experience as well as real-world application scenarios (Mahalingam & Md Yunus, 2017; Musa, Lie, & Azman, 2012). A number of teachers have worried that CEFR-aligned textbooks pose a greater level of complexity which could create learning challenges for some students especially in rural or under-resourced schools (Muthukrishnan, Fung Lan, Anandhan, & Swamy, 2024; Yunus, 2013). The effectiveness of textbooks for closing the proficiency gap between urban and rural primary schools remains uncertain (Nordin, Abdul Kadir, Zakaria, Abdullah, & Abdullah, 2018).

The studies by Shak et al. (2021) and Din and Yamat (2020) demonstrate that CEFR-aligned imported textbooks remain culturally foreign to Malaysian students due to a lack of contextual adaptation. The unfamiliar content in these textbooks may disrupt Malaysian student attention and learning because they are not accustomed to these materials. Multiple global education frameworks have failed to adapt to specific local cultural contexts. Localized textbook content that follows the CEFR along with other international educational standards makes sense given the need to adapt global materials to local contexts. The studies conducted by Shak et al. (2021) reveal additional concerns. The research by Shak et al. (2021) and Uri (2021) demonstrate that Malaysian teachers are not adequately prepared to deliver CEFR-aligned curricula. New teaching materials lead to some teachers being viewed as insufficiently trained or lacking confidence in their use so that effective CEFR implementation becomes limited. Little research has been conducted concerning institutionalized teacher training programs and a range of support mechanisms that could facilitate a more orderly transition to CEFR-aligned educational practices.

Meanwhile, Bakar (2020) notes that the CEFR-aligned curriculum represents an important strategic initiative. There are insufficient support structures in the form of resources and pedagogical tools to enable it to be fully implemented. This includes access to supplementary learning materials and multimedia resources that can enrich the students' learning experience. A potential area for future research is the development of more and varied supportive resources that could be aligned to the CEFR framework. CEFR alignment encountered structural and bureaucratic issues also identified by Nawai and Said (2020) and others, such as inflexible curriculum structures. A common curriculum that serves multiple purposes makes it difficult to implement the flexible and learner-centric approach at the heart of the CEFR. This indicates a research gap in understanding how the curriculum can be more flexible to enable CEFR alignment without compromising core objectives. Besides, the implementation of CEFR-aligned curricula involves multiple actors, such as policymakers, teachers, and students and research by Mohammed, Raof, and Yusof (2021) suggests that we need more successful strategies to engage these different stakeholders so that they are well-informed and on board with the changes. The impact on student learning outcomes and the experience of teachers needs to be taken into consideration. Although the mandating of the CEFR taxonomy in Malaysian schools is an attempt to improve English language proficiency to keep up with global standards, ultimately current gaps in cultural relevance, teacher training, resources, curriculum flexibility, and stakeholder engagement must be narrowed. In addition, pedagogically sound approaches should find a balance between global standards and local educational needs and contexts. More research needs to be done to find the means to address the gaps to fulfill the promise of the CEFR in the Malaysian educational context. Subsequently, the current study aimed to explore the perception of teachers toward the implementation of the current CEFR-aligned English textbook in national schools in Malaysia.

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

A mixed-methods research design which combined qualitative and quantitative techniques was used in this study to examine how CEFR-aligned English textbooks function in Malaysian schools and their effectiveness. By combining multiple research approaches researchers achieved both balanced and nuanced insights into how CEFR-

aligned materials were applied and their impact. The study team implemented a stratified random sampling technique following Raj's framework to include English teachers from three different Malaysian regions and two educational institution types (Creswell, 2014; Shorten & Smith, 2017).

According to Merriam and Tisdell (2016) SPSS processed the quantitative survey data which resulted in an extensive statistical summary of teachers' perspectives. The researchers used descriptive analysis techniques that included frequency counts and percentage calculations to obtain means for a comprehensive understanding of their dataset. The qualitative interview data provided teachers' personal experiences with CEFR-aligned textbooks which researchers analyzed thematically by employing NVivo software. The software-driven analysis produced highly detailed findings regarding the teachers' actual experiences. Researchers employed an inductive approach during the data analysis process which involved systematic coding and examination of transcribed interview sessions.

Through mixed methods, the researchers achieved a comprehensive grasp of the research problem. The research identified patterns and themes which highlighted the pedagogical challenges faced by teachers and demonstrated the critical influence of CEFR-aligned textbooks on student engagement and effectiveness in the classroom through data analysis. The research team developed a complete and in-depth view of how CEFR-aligned English textbooks function in Malaysian schools through statistical and descriptive data analysis. The research findings reveal essential information about the intricate process of applying and measuring CEFR-aligned English textbooks in Malaysia while establishing foundational guidelines for subsequent research and policy development (Kumar, 2011; Smith & Brown, 2020).

3.1. Ethical Issues

The research ethics committee of UNITAR International University's Faculty of Education and Humanities in Malaysia provided ethical approval for the study. All participants provided written informed consent after they were guaranteed confidentiality for their responses. Researchers implemented specific actions to maintain ethical standards while protecting participant rights and well-being throughout the research process. The research team implemented several protective measures for participant privacy and confidentiality through secure data storage methods, anonymization of individual responses and the elimination of personally identifiable information from research outputs (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016).

4. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The results from the SPSS data analysis appear in this section. Tables 1 and 2 show the demographic characteristics which indicate that 88% of respondents were male while females made up 12%. National schools accounted for 78.6% of participants while 14.2% were Chinese students and 4.7% attended special integrated education schools with Indian students only 2.5%. Tables 1 and 2 present the details.

Table 1. Respondents based on gender.

Gender	Number of respondents	Percentage (%)
Male	37	88%
Female	5	12%
Total	42	100

Table 2. Total respondents based on school type.

School type	Number of respondents	Percentage (%)
National schools	33	78.6
Sekolah Jenis Kebangsaan Cina (Chinese)	6	14.2%
Sekolah Jenis Kebangsaan Tamil (Indian)	1	2.5
PPKI/special integrated education	2	4.7%
Total	42	100

4.1. The Appropriateness of the Content, Grammar, Vocabulary, and Complexity of the Textbook

This research question aimed to investigate the appropriateness of the textbook content, including its grammar, vocabulary, and complexity. The study explored the differences in content and complexity between the KSSR and CEFR-aligned textbooks. The findings revealed significant concerns about the impact on students' English proficiency if the Ministry of Education is to reinstate the KSSR English textbook and discontinue the CEFR-aligned textbook based on teachers' perceptions. When asked whether students in the 21st century would be able to speak and communicate confidently in English under such a scenario, most respondents (52.2%) indicated "no" while a slightly lower percentage (47.8%) stated "yes". The researchers sought clarification from teachers to understand the reasoning behind their responses. The analysis of the interview data highlighted key concerns expressed by teachers regarding the KSSR English textbook such as the textbook's failure to adequately prepare students for real-world communication, the lack of focus on developing students' overall proficiency, and the disconnect between the textbook content and the current communicative demands of the 21st century. Table 3 presents the details.

Table 3. Teachers' preferences between KSSR and CEFR-aligned English textbooks.

Book type	Percentage (%)
KSSR English textbooks	52.2
CEFR English book	47.8

Figure 1 presents the opinion of the teachers on teaching and delivering the lessons using the KSSR English textbook as compared to the new CEFR textbook that is currently used in schools. Questions were based on which of these are easier for students to follow and grasp most easily, the KSSR English textbook or the CEFR English textbook.

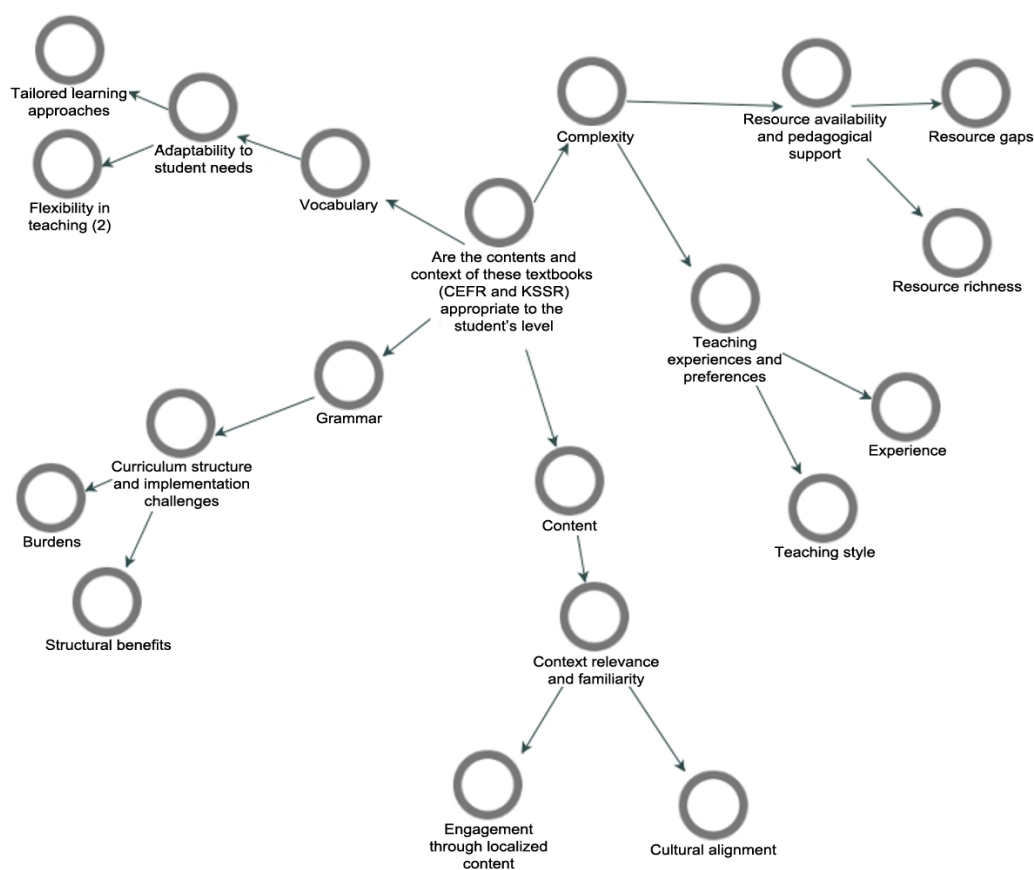


Figure 1. Teachers' opinions on teaching and delivering lessons using the KSSR English textbooks compared to the new CEFR-aligned textbooks.

The perception of teachers on the preference for using KSSR textbooks as compared to the new CEFR books is illustrated in the figure above which includes selected quotes and other responses from the participants. These responses describe again the relevancy of context and familiarity within the Malaysian context when studying or in their learning journey. It explains how participation is preferred mostly with the textbooks including KSSR with the relatedness to the Malaysian context and these results are consistent with previous studies. In comparison with previous studies by [Uri and Abd Aziz \(2018\)](#); [Aman \(2021\)](#) and [Hadi and Shah \(2020\)](#) the participants (8, 9, 10, 24, 25, 26 and 38) pointed out the solid alignment of contextual cultural and content familiarity when it comes specifically to KSSR textbooks compared to the CEFR textbooks. Among the varied participants, the common trend as to why the KSSR textbook is preferred was due to the stronger alignment with the Malaysian context. It was remarked that the KSSR textbook contains a lot of localized content. From the illustrations to the stories and scenarios, Malaysian daily life and culture are reflected in it. Such contextual alignment facilitates the trend of interest in reading since these textbooks contain relatable content to mutually given connections when put into proper context. This result is also supported by the work of [Calafato \(2021\)](#); [Aziz, Narayanasamy, Mohamad, and Hameed \(2019\)](#) and [Lukas, Patrick, Chong, Jaino, and Yunus \(2020\)](#). Therefore, contextual appropriateness plays a significant role in bridging the gap between the familiarity of students and the content that is in the module textbooks. This mutual familiarity with the local context enables students to have a better grasp of the textbooks, as it can connect with the students. Therefore, local content in textbooks is highly appealing to students and contributes to their willingness and interest in reading the textbooks. This increase in reading engagement in school materials is essential as it has a significant implication on student learning outcomes. When students can resonate with the content of school modules and textbooks, they will generally be more willing to engage with the material. This creates an initial entry point to deep and consistent learning. The benefits of KSSR textbooks that illustrate local culture and contexts have enabled teachers and educational ministries to bolster the learning of students effectively.

The current result aligned with [Alih, Yusoff, and Abdul \(2020\)](#) and [Bakar \(2020\)](#) in terms of resource richness and pedagogical support. The participants (4, 5, 30, 27 and 42) pointed out the polarity of resource richness and pedagogical support by revealing the contrasting usage experience of KSSR-aligned textbooks and CEFR-aligned materials. Some teachers praised the predictability feature of KSSR textbooks as they have a sense of when to start and where to go next. They find them relatively easier to use. However, some criticisms, such as the insufficient of supplementary resources which include workbooks and multimedia aids were brought up by some teachers as the supplementary resources were found to be scarce (mostly none) in KSSR textbooks supported by [Aripin and Yusoff \(2022\)](#). On the other hand, participants (30 and 42) showed that CEFR-aligned materials were praised by some teachers for the richness in the resource pool which not only enriched the teaching and learning experiences but also facilitated a more interactive pedagogy. The interactive pedagogy can be formed as the learners can refer to the more abundant online multimedia aids which include various modes of audio-visual aids like videos and animations. The interactive pedagogy allows the teachers to improvise the lesson plan based on the interests and strengths of the students which provides greater adaptability in supporting students with diverse needs and learning styles.

Moreover, as can be seen from the responses given by participants (4, 16, 28, 33, 36 and 39), the evaluation results also reveal feelings of frustration with the bureaucratic problems associated with curriculum implementation. Some teachers feel that KSSR (and CEFR) places too many requirements on lesson planning and curriculum delivery as it means they have to manage a lot of administrative work. This aligns with the finding of [Nawai and Said \(2020\)](#). Many teachers argue that these requirements are burdensome and bureaucratic and reflect a deep mistrust in the teaching profession, potentially limiting pedagogical creativity and flexibility. On the contrary, some teachers believe that the structured approach of KSSR (and CEFR) helps provide clear educational objectives to ensure consistency in educational practices.

Additionally, the findings highlighted the considerable heterogeneity in teacher experiences and preferences, which may also have played a role. For example, younger teachers who would not have been schooled under the old KSSR template might gravitate toward the CEFR approach due to its novelty and its perceived alignment with international standards. By contrast, more experienced teachers who have always known the KSSR system might prefer it to the CEFR approach due to their familiarity with the content and its perceived ease of use. This variation points to the influence of personal teaching experience and tenure on curriculum preference and the complex process of how participants adjust their teaching practices to new educational standards. The outcome of participants (15,18,19,22,32,34 and 37) are in line with the findings of Aziz et al. (2019) and Aziz et al. (2018). In the responses, most teachers agreed to utilize the CEFR-aligned books rather than the English-published books. The CEFR-aligned books are much more structured and organized. Even though the usage of words in the CEFR-aligned books is complex, teachers are adaptable to the books and find them interesting and fun to deliver. Furthermore, the resources, materials, and videos are readily available on the website and on the YouTube channel which is easily accessible. However, it is important to highlight that the schools must provide teachers with WiFi, computers, and projectors for viewing. The implementation of the CEFR framework in Malaysia was met with many challenges, including curricular shifts, changes in teaching and assessment practices, and the use of different textbooks and lastly familiarizing the teachers with this teaching for the first time. The first generation of rewriting textbooks and the teachers' resistance to the content of these internationally produced English books raised arguments about their complexity. Later, when teachers were more familiar with the content, the new syllabus, and its goal which is in line with the DSKP syllabus, they saw the benefits for their students to be introduced to the international context in which these textbooks have been produced. The findings from our research by Sidhu, Kaur, and Chi (2018) and Sabbir (2019) reveal that Malaysian teachers have responded positively to CEFR implementation. The survey responses indicate that the teachers felt that English lessons should be introduced first using CEFR English books before the teachers used extended materials on Malaysian culture and history. The teachers insisted that the lesson materials must be local, indigenized and adapted to reflect local content to help the students relate to the lesson, and thus better understand the materials. The Ministry of Education is encouraged not to be ethnocentric, and to localize lessons and expose the students to more local cultural reference points that will help students better understand their own history and culture as well as promote tolerance in multiracial Malaysia (Jelas & Mohd Ali, 2014). The CEFR books are challenging for special needs students. Special programs and frameworks have been developed to ensure that special needs students are taught with their fellow students. In Singapore, the Ministry of Education's inclusive education policy makes it possible for up to five special needs students to be integrated into one mainstream class, either full-time or part-time, depending on their strengths and the type of activity they are participating in. Students are given the option to be included in some or all the academic and co-curricular activities. Abdul Rahim and Jalalian Daghigh (2020) noted a similar problem, particularly among students in rural areas who could not comprehend the topics in English textbooks due to cultural differences and contexts provided in the textbooks.

4.2. Textbook Features That Enhance Engagement

The survey questionnaire had been conveyed and the data had been decoded by looking for the highest frequency of words repeated by respondents to answer research question 2. Having an in-depth understanding will provide the most viable answers towards the fourth objective.

4.2.1. Attractiveness

Referring to all the CEFR-aligned English books, the characters, visuals, contents, and contexts are interesting as compared to the locally published KSSR English books. The colors used are vibrant, the visuals aren't stereotypes, and the inclusion of international content, religion, and cultures makes them more appealing.

Table 4. Attractiveness of the books (CEFR and KSSR).

	Items	Frequency	Percent	Valid percent	Cumulative percent
Valid	Null	4	9.5	9.5	9.5
	No	15	35.7	35.7	45.2
	Yes	19	45.2	45.2	90.5
	Half	4	9.5	9.5	100.0
	Total	42	100.0	100.0	

Having the data keyed in the SPSS version 26 as shown in Table 4, these are the results stipulated and understood (N = 4) describe teachers without an answer because these are the teachers who are new to the teaching force, (No =15, 35.7%) This number gives the reading that the KSSR books do not provide the possible stimuli for students to interact with each other. Despite having clear visuals, the topic and aims of the lesson aren't clearly stated, whereby teachers are not able to have a productive lesson (yes = 19, 45.2%). A teacher who has many years of experience and can create productive and viable lessons for students to communicate their thoughts about the image. Lastly (half =4, 9.5%), these teachers are utilizing both the KSSR and CEFR for the students might be weaker in English proficiency, and thus need other sources to connect with the image. Teachers needed to study the content and locate suitable resources for further development in English proficiency for students to interact and use the language more often.

4.2.2. Storyline

In conjunction with the answers above, most teachers needed a simple story and pictures to promote learning in the classroom. The approach of the KSSR English books does not provide sufficient stimuli or proper indication of the aims of the topic (Rashid & Sandaran, 2022). The learning and teaching contents are difficult to approach when using the books in the classroom.

4.2.3. Language Content

Based on the page on the left, the colors of the page are dull and the illustrations are simple and not very clear-cut. At the bottom of the page, questions are posed to the students but without prior knowledge of what peer pressure is, students will lose interest in the topic and will only be drilled by the teacher in answering the questions below. Therefore, a storyline, content, and further explanations are required for the concept of peer pressure to be understood by students. The challenges faced will be wide, especially for low proficiency students or weak students; it is hard to comprehend the visuals and texts. Thus, elaborations and language content make a huge difference in understanding texts. Language content does not only allow students to use the English language in class but it also develops other areas of learning especially in listening skills, reading, and writing as well. All the respondents' answers led to a decision that it is not applicable to use the KSSR English books in the 21st century due to the lack of content and language development. The materials and resources are not easily accessible compared to the CEFR English textbooks. The CEFR English books are well-developed and planned, the resources are equally distributed throughout the schools in Malaysia, and each module or chapter is accompanied by very clear guidance on how to carry out the activities effectively which is the great strength of the CEFR English books (Rashid & Sandaran, 2022).

4.3. Teachers' Perspective towards the Changes in the English Syllabus

This section is to answer the questions based on the Likert Scale (1: greatly disagree, 2: disagree, 3: neutral, 4: agree, and 5: greatly agree). There are two aspects to these survey questions, section B gives the information of teachers' perspectives on the books, and section C is based on the quality of the CEFR and KSSR English books.

Table 5 shows the number of respondents who have been teaching using both the KSSR and CEFR English books. The table shows that M=3.33 have a good feeling about the change in the implementation of the KSSR English syllabus to the CEFR-aligned framework. The change has led to a positive response of mean=3.38. The CEFR English textbooks also provide teachers with the ability to deliver the contents of the book in an innovative way as compared to the stereotype KSSR English books with the M=3.57. A few teachers responded that the KSSR English syllabus is legible and more effective than the CEFR-aligned framework due to the ethnography of the school. The school could be situated in the rural parts of Malaysia, thus getting the materials and resources to supplement and strengthen the English language could be difficult. This is according to Table 5 with M=2.90. However, the highest number of respondents did respond that the activities did provide the students with sufficient activities in terms of writing, reading, speaking, listening, and critical thinking skills and these received 12 responses with M=10.30 adding to the perception that the CEFR is easier to teach as compared to the KSSR English syllabus.

Table 5. Descriptive statistics for teachers' perceptions towards the English books (CEFR and KSSR).

Items	N	Range	Minimum	Mean
1) I have a good feeling about the change from KSSR to CEFR English textbooks.	42	3	2	3.33
2) The change in the English syllabus curriculum has been a positive process for me.	42	4	1	3.38
3) The new CEFR textbooks allow me to prepare and deliver the language in a fresh new way.	42	4	1	3.57
4) I am happy with the change from KSSR English textbooks to CEFR English textbooks.	42	4	1	3.55
5) I was trained in how to use and implement the new English curriculum and CEFR English textbooks.	42	4	2	3.79
6) I have used and implemented the new CEFR curriculum and materials.	42	4	1	3.86
7) KSSR was more effective than the CEFR-aligned framework.	42	4	1	2.90
8) I am grateful for the CEFR English textbooks. Students gained proficiency in the English language.	42	4	1	3.26
9) The activities are exciting and stimulate students' critical thinking skills.	42	4	1	3.52
10) CEFR English textbooks provide sufficient writing, reading, speaking and listening skills.	42	4	1	3.60
11) CEFR is easier to teach as compared to KSSR.	42	4	1	3.64
Valid N (Listwise)	42			

Table 6. Descriptive statistics for the quality of the CEFR and KSSR books.

Items	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. deviation
The CEFR books are attractive.	42	1	5	3.67	1.119
The print and paper quality is of high standards.	42	1	5	3.81	1.174
The graphics and colors are bright and relevant to Malaysian students.	42	1	5	3.57	1.213
The binding is strong.	42	1	5	3.40	1.106
The durability and longevity of the books are good.	42	1	5	3.38	1.188
The KSSR English books are attractive.	42	1	5	3.31	1.070
The print and paper qualities of the KSSR English books are of high standards.	42	1	5	3.24	1.008
The price of the CEFR books is affordable.	42	1	5	2.69	1.115
The KSSR English textbooks demonstrate the balance of the main language skills.	42	1	5	3.38	1.168
The CEFR English textbooks demonstrate the balance of the main language skills.	42	1	5	3.86	1.049
The culture presented in the CEFR English textbook is appropriate for Malaysian context.	42	1	5	2.79	1.220
The culture presented in the KSSR English textbook is appropriate for Malaysian context.	42	1	5	3.79	1.048
The textbook serves as the main syllabus of the current curriculum and there isn't a need for outsourced materials.	42	1	5	2.98	1.070

Comparing the quality print of the books CEFR and KSSR as shown in Table 6, the mean agreement scores for the CEFR were 3.81 (SD= 1.174) compared with the KSSR mean agreement scores of 3.24 (SD =1.008). In comparison by numbers, the CEFR English books print quality is far better and attractive as compared to the KSSR English books.

The culture and context of both books did not show a very wide gap. CEFR received the mean of agreement score 2.79 (SD= 1.220) whereas the KSSR English book mean agreement score was 3.79 (SD= 1.048). It is undeniable that the KSSR will receive a greater score because the books are published locally by Malaysian English writers whereas the CEFR English books are internationally imported into the country and the majority of the content is based on international content. It did receive positive feedback from the teachers with the change faced by students as they progress into their primary years by becoming well equipped and acquiring prior knowledge even before using the CEFR English books.

5. CONCLUSION

This study critically assesses Malaysian teachers' perspectives using CEFR-aligned English textbooks in the national school system with regard to the textbooks' effectiveness in improving students' English language acquisition and providing the students with adequate English linguistic and cultural exposure. The shift from KSSR textbooks published locally to imported textbooks such as Super Minds 1 and Get Smart Plus 3 and 4, English Plus 1 is a significant move. Imported textbooks are widely available and are replacing KSSR textbooks in the market. The imported textbooks are in line with the global technological and infrastructure changes. In some regions, especially in Eastern Malaysia (Borneo), such as Sabah and Sarawak, some infrastructural issues hinder the effective use of these resources.

The study concludes that printed textbooks are still equally important for the learning process as they are very helpful for the teacher to prepare activities that better suit their students' learning needs and levels. Besides, CEFR-aligned textbooks are considered more attractive than KSSR textbooks as they are colorful and more attractive. These books also help introduce students to different cultural contexts and linguistic styles. However, KSSR textbooks are still not ready to be entirely abandoned as they are said to offer less attractive activities and are relatively narrow in scope (especially in narrative, language arts, and critical thinking skills). Meanwhile, CEFR textbooks are expected not only to meet the educational objectives in the Dokumen Standard Kurikulum Dan Pentaksiran (DSKP) by improving the communicative ability, reading comprehension, and grammatical accuracy of the learners but they are also designed to offer a more colorful and vibrant learning experience through images and cultural perspectives from around the world to lead them to become more dynamic and interesting. This is important for them to be confident and capable of communicating and interacting in different contexts.

6. LIMITATIONS AND IMPLICATIONS OF THE STUDY

The current study on CEFR-aligned English textbooks in Malaysian national schools reveals critical constraints and implications for policymaking and educational practice. A geographical access issue exists as infrastructure deficits in Eastern Malaysia's Sabah and Sarawak states prevent schools from fully utilizing the material resources allocated for the new curriculum's bring your own textbook policy. Additionally, our study has highlighted the following gap in the education sector: insufficient teacher preparedness to transition to the CEFR-aligned materials. Extensive and intensive teacher professional development programs are required to engage teachers both intellectually and emotionally in the necessary pedagogical and assessment changes, but these programs are currently lacking. This lack of preparedness poses a risk of disrupting the transition to the CEFR-aligned curriculum.

These findings point to crucial directions for educational policy and curriculum development. Firstly, urgent policy reforms are necessary. Equitable distribution of educational resources and teacher training programs should

be adjusted across all regions. Infrastructure improvements may be required, such as incorporating CEFR-focused modules into nationwide teacher education programs. Secondly, curriculum development must incorporate local materials aligned with CEFR levels to enhance relevance and interactivity. Teachers can develop instructional materials based on both CEFR standards and local cultural contexts, thereby piquing students' interest and improving learning outcomes by localizing CEFR-aligned textbooks. Lastly, enhanced stakeholder engagement is crucial. Involving teachers, parents, and policymakers in implementation can make the CEFR-aligned textbook process more consultative and address stakeholder concerns on-site. A CEFR-aligned curriculum can propel Malaysia towards educational excellence with these considerations and targeted policies.

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