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**TEACHERS' UNDERSTANDING OF THE CEFR-ALIGNED
ENGLISH LANGUAGE CURRICULUM IMPLEMENTATION
THROUGH THE CASCADE TRAINING**

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**DOCTOR OF EDUCATION
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2025**



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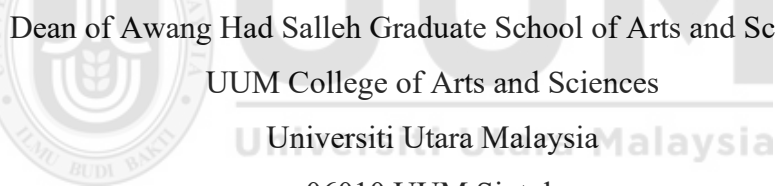
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Abstrak

Pada tahun 2016, kurikulum Bahasa Inggeris diselaraskan dengan CEFR bagi sekolah menengah di Malaysia telah diperkenalkan dan ia akan menamatkan kitaran pertama pada tahun 2025. Kurikulum tersebut telah menunjukkan ketidakseimbangan dalam pemahaman guru, keberkesanaan latihan cascade dan pelaksanaan kurikulum. Kajian yang berteraskan kaedah kualitatif ini telah menggunakan pendekatan penyelidikan naratif untuk menerokai pemahaman guru dan pelaksanaan kurikulum dalam kalangan lapan guru Bahasa Inggeris yang juga merupakan ketua panitia di sekolah masing-masing. Kajian ini meneroka sejauh mana pemahaman guru Bahasa Inggeris tentang pelaksanaan kurikulum Bahasa Inggeris, keberkesanan latihan cascade dan pelaksanaan pelajaran selepas latihan cascade. Kajian ini seterusnya memberikan penambahbaikan latihan dan amalan bilik darjah. Data berkaitan dengan pemahaman guru, interpretasi dan penyampaian kurikulum oleh guru telah diperoleh melalui sumber temu bual secara terbuka, penulisan refleksi secara bimbingan, dan analisis dokumen. Data seterusnya dianalisis secara analisis tematik. Dapatan kajian ini menunjukkan spektrum pemahaman yang bervariasi dalam kalangan guru. Terdapat sesetengah guru dapat menyepadukan prinsip kurikulum Bahasa Inggeris yang sejajar dengan CEFR dalam perancangan pelajaran, reka bentuk aktiviti dan pelaksanaan pelajaran Bahasa Inggeris. Dapatan juga menunjukkan terdapat guru yang masih tidak dapat menguasai pelaksanaan kurikulum ini secara menyeluruh. Hasil kajian yang bercampur antara kejayaan dan cabaran ini boleh berkait rapat dengan keberkesanaan latihan secara cascade yang telah dihadiri oleh guru. Kajian ini juga menunjukkan amalan pengajaran yang berpusatkan guru dan pengajaran berorientasikan peperiksaan masih wujud dalam pelaksanaan kurikulum tapi masih terbatas. Kajian ini telah menyediakan beberapa cadangan untuk melaksanakan latihan guru dan panduan pelaksanaan kurikulum yang lebih efektif selaras dengan kurikulum Bahasa Inggeris yang berasaskan teori konstruktivisme dan action-oriented approach.

Kata Kunci: Pelaksanaan kurikulum, CEFR, pemahaman guru, latihan cascade, penyelidikan naratif.

Abstract

In 2016, the CEFR-aligned English language curriculum for secondary schools in Malaysia was introduced, and it will complete its first cycle in 2025. The implementation of the curriculum has revealed significant disparities in teacher understanding, cascade training effectiveness, and curriculum implementation. Being qualitative in nature, this study employs narrative inquiry to explore the understanding and implementation of the curriculum among eight English language teachers who are also the heads of the English language panels in their respective schools. The study explores the extent of English teachers' understanding of the English language curriculum, the effectiveness of the cascade training and the implementation of the lessons post-cascade training. The study further provides recommendations for the improvement of training and classroom practices. The data on teachers' understanding, interpretation and the delivery of the curriculum was obtained through the articulation of their experiences via open-ended interviews, guided reflections, and document analysis which were then analysed thematically. The findings of the study revealed a varied spectrum of understanding among teachers. While some teachers were able to integrate the principles of CEFR-aligned English language curriculum in their lesson planning, activity design, and English lesson implementation. The findings also indicate that there are teachers who have yet to understand the implementation of this curriculum. The mixed results of this study, which reflect both successes and challenges, may be closely linked to the effectiveness of the cascade training attended by the teachers. This study also found that teacher-centred teaching practices and exam-oriented instruction are still present in the implementation of the curriculum, although their application remains limited. This study has provided several recommendations for conducting teacher training and implementing curriculum guidelines more effectively, in line with the English language curriculum based on constructive theory and the action-oriented approach.

Keywords: Curriculum implementation, CEFR, teacher understanding, cascade training, narrative inquiry

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At the culmination of this voyage, a journey meticulously crafted with threads of joy and trials, I bow before the divine grace with a heart brimming with thankfulness, invoking the sacred essence of Jai Shree Ram. Acknowledging the celestial blessings that have been my beacon through tumultuous seas and tranquil harbours alike.

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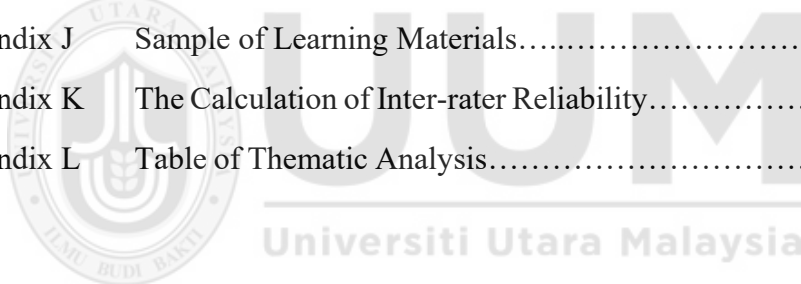
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List of Abbreviations

CEFR	Common European Framework of Reference for Languages
CPT	Cambridge Proficiency Test
DSKP	<i>Dokumen Kurikulum dan Standard Prestasi</i>
ELSQC	English Language Standard Quality Council
MEB	Malaysian Education Blueprint 2013 – 2025
KBSM	<i>Kurikulum Bersepadu Sekolah Menengah</i>
KBSR	<i>Kurikulum Bersepadu Sekolah Rendah</i>
KSSM	<i>Kurikulum Standard Sekolah Menengah</i>
KSSR	<i>Kurikulum Standard Sekolah Rendah</i>
SOW	Scheme of Work
TESL	Teaching English as a Second Language
TESOL	Teaching English to Speakers of other Languages
PPSMI	<i>Pengajaran dan Pembelajaran Sains dan Matematik dalam Bahasa Inggeris</i>
SBELC	Standard Based English Language Curriculum
ORC	Overcoming Resistance to Change Model
LOC	Leadership Obstacle Course
HOTS	Higher Order Thinking Skills
SPM	<i>Sijil Pelajaran Malaysia</i>
FCE	First Certificate English, Cambridge

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

The world is constantly evolving, and as a result, educational needs and curricula must be regularly updated to prepare learners for the future. These ongoing changes in curriculum require teachers to not only understand but also effectively interpret and implement them, as teachers are at the core of this process. The success or failure of any curriculum ultimately depends on how well teachers grasp and apply its principles in the classroom through the training provided to them. In Malaysia, the English language curriculum has undergone several significant changes, with the most recent being the shift to a CEFR-aligned framework. This study aims to examine the extent to which teachers have understood the curriculum and how they implement the curriculum, particularly through cascade training; an initiative designed to enhance classroom practices and ensure that curriculum implementation aligns with the curriculum objectives.

1.2 Background of the Study

Changes and implementation of new curriculum have become a global trend which reflects the changing demands of the global workforce (Agolla, 2022; Dewi & Rahmawati, 2020; Wang, 2019). The curriculum must adapt to the evolving requirements, ensuring that students are equipped for the challenges and careers of tomorrow. To fulfil these needs, curriculum change, and implementation has become imminent among countries around the globe including the Asian countries (Gleeson, 2022; Gleeson et al., 2020; Wang, 2019). Malaysia is among the countries that has

been tirelessly working on improving her education system through curriculum reforms that changes the face of education system according to the global needs.

The education system in Malaysia has undergone various changes in curriculum post-independence. The most recent one was developed based on the Malaysian Education Blueprint 2013–2025 (MEB) after considering all the aspects in the curriculum. The MEB was developed after a comprehensive evaluation of the performance of the education system then. It was also an effort to put the Malaysian education system on par with developed countries. One of the transformations that is given the utmost importance in the reform agenda via MEB is teacher practices towards quality teaching (Ministry of Education, 2013). This is because the study prior to developing the MEB, reported that over 50% of classroom teaching and learning practices that occur in Malaysian classrooms did not reflect the requirements in the curriculum and were delivered unsatisfactorily (Ministry of Education, Malaysia, 2013, p.136). The lessons mostly lacked the process of developing higher-order thinking skills, instead focused on delivering the content at a surface level and heavily practised exam-oriented teaching without a focus in the content provided (Ministry of Education, Malaysia, 2013, p.137).

Besides, the lessons were carried out to achieve only surface-level understanding rather than enabling pupils to think, analyse and interpret information (Ministry of Education, Malaysia, 2013, p.137). Moreover, student-engagements were not given focus and lessons were very much in a lecture format or more commonly known as teacher-centred (Ministry of Education, Malaysia, 2013, p.137). There was also a vast difference between schools and the Ministry of Education on the notion of ‘classroom

practices' which was highlighted in the blueprint. These show that, there was an absence of shared comprehension regarding the appearance of teaching and learning practices in the classroom. (Ministry of Education, Malaysia, 2013). Hence, improving teaching practices became one of the reform agenda of the Ministry of education (Ministry of Education, Malaysia, 2013).

As an integral aspect of this reform initiative the English language education was also included as the significance, value and priority of the English language was stated in the MEB. Strengthening the language among pupils was part of the eleven shifts listed in MEB. In accordance with the reform initiative, the English language curriculum underwent a significant transformation with the creation of the English Language Education Roadmap (2015–2025). It was developed to envision a proper direction for English language Education. The roadmap aims to bring the English language curriculum used in Malaysian classrooms into alignment with the CEFR framework. A major emphasis of the roadmap is the alignment of the curriculum with classroom teaching and learning practices, fostering high-quality educational experiences. (Ministry of Education, Malaysia, 2015, p.12).

Reform of the English language curriculum was much needed as classroom teaching and learning practices did not reflect the process of building language skills; instead, it was too examination-driven (Ministry of Education, Malaysia, 2015, p.10; UNESCO, 2013). It was also highlighted in MEB in the dimensions of written curriculum, taught curriculum, and the examined curriculum. The concern that the MEB highlighted was that the written curriculum was not given importance in classroom practices, and examinations did not reflect the intended educational

outcomes (Ministry of Education, Malaysia, 2013, p.106; Don et al., 2015). With the misalignments in curriculum documents, classroom practices, as well as examinations, the English language curriculum then was not moving in the right direction.

Hence, the English language Education Roadmap (2015 – 2025) was developed to put curriculum, classroom practice and assessment into appropriate alignment by bringing the Malaysian English language curriculum into alignment with the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) (Don et al., 2015). It was also highlighted in the English language Education Roadmap (2015 – 2025) that the teaching and learning practices in the English language classrooms should be given the utmost importance to ensure the success of the reform agenda (Ministry of Education, Malaysia, 2015). Furthermore, it is essential for teachers to possess a solid comprehension of the curriculum to ensure that its implementation in classrooms corresponds with the outlined curriculum guidelines (Ministry of Education, Malaysia, 2015). To achieve its aims, professional development courses in cascade training modes were conducted throughout Malaysia to ensure teachers understand and able to implement the curriculum through their classroom practices. With the reform agenda reaching its complete cycle in 2025, it is high time to look at how much teachers had understood the implementation of curriculum in their classroom practices through the cascade training that they had attended. This study is essential to ensure the success and sustenance of the current English language curriculum as well as its future direction.

The scope of the present study includes various key aspects that should be emphasised. Firstly, the geographical scope of the study would be in Malaysia and government

secondary schools in Malaysia that are using the English language Syllabus based on the Standard Curriculum for Secondary Schools (KSSM) which is aligned with the CEFR framework. Therefore, the emphasis of this inquiry will reveal teachers' understanding and their practices at the secondary school from Form 1 till Form 5 in Malaysia only. However, it can inform the wider audience around the globe who share similar educational backgrounds in curriculum implementation. The outcomes of this research may potentially help to improvise the curriculum implementation in our own country after the completion of the first cycle of the CEFR-aligned KSSM English language Curriculum.

The *Kurikulum Standard Sekolah Menengah* (KSSM), aligned with the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR), focuses on developing communicative competence among students in real-life contexts. English language lessons are designed to be student-centred and promote interactive learning. Typically, English language lessons in secondary classrooms are conducted for three hours a week, spread over three sessions. Each session lasts an hour. The lessons primarily focus on Reading, Writing, Listening, and Speaking skills. Additionally, 'Literature in Action' and 'Language Awareness' are integral parts of the curriculum. All skills are covered in every unit of the textbooks, following a 13-lesson cycle that repeats after the completion of each unit (Ministry of Education, 2021). The cycle is illustrated in Table 1.

Table 1

A 13-Lesson Cycle as Illustrated in the Secondary School English Language Scheme of Work

Lesson	Skill/Focus
1	Reading
2	Language Awareness
3	Listening
4	Speaking
5	Writing
6	Revision
7	Reading
8	Language Awareness
9	Listening
10	Speaking
11	Writing
12	Revision
13	Literature in Action

NOTE: Retrieved from the “English Language Scheme of Work for Secondary Schools”, Ministry of Education Malaysia, 2020, pg,7.

The English Language Syllabus for Secondary Schools, Scheme of Work (SOW), and textbooks are tailored to this lesson cycle to ensure equal emphasis on all skills. English language teachers are expected to complete 112 lessons as prescribed in the SOW over an academic year. The SOW provides suggestions for activities suitable for students. Teachers are required to use the SOW to prepare their lessons and adhere to the cycles strictly to cover the 112 hours of lessons. These include non-textbook lessons, Project-Based Learning, and teacher-designed lessons, offering teachers the freedom to create their own lessons on topics that address any perceived skill gaps among their students.

For lesson preparation, teachers must align their lesson plans with the learning and content standards specified in the SOW. They may use the suggested activities or devise their own, provided they align with the standards and help achieve the learning objectives. Each lesson focuses on two different skills, one main and one complementary. Both are to be integrated throughout the lesson. A sample of the SOW page is shown in Figure 1.

Figure 1

A Sample from the Form Four Scheme of Work

5. Scheme of Work: Lessons 1 – 112				
Unit 1				
SCHEME OF WORK: TEXTBOOK BASED LESSON (UNIT 1)				
WEEK: —	LESSON 1(Reading 1)	MAIN SKILL(S) FOCUS: Reading	THEME: Science and Technology	
	TOPIC: Let's Chat	CROSS CURRICULAR ELEMENT(S): Information and Communications Technology	LANGUAGE/GRAMMAR FOCUS: Words/phrases related to free-time activities; phrases expressing likes and dislikes; phrases expressing opinion	
CONTENT STANDARD	LEARNING STANDARD	LEARNING OUTLINE		DIFFERENTIATION STRATEGIES
Main Skill Reading 3.1 Understand a variety of texts by using a range of appropriate reading strategies to construct meaning	Main Skill Reading 3.1.1 Understand the main points in extended texts on a wide range of familiar topics	Pre-lesson Activate prior knowledge and experience in this lesson using Activity A. Lesson delivery This lesson focuses on Activities B, D and E (C is optional). See the Teacher's Book for detailed guidance. Note that in Activity B pupils are asked to read for gist. Activities B and D focus on developing the main skill for this lesson. Activity E focuses on the complementary skill. In order to fully focus on this skill, remind pupils to justify their opinions. Post-lesson Ask pupils to review their learning in this lesson by getting them to identify with their talk partner(s) at least one new word or expression that they have learned in relation to the topic of free-time activities. When pupils are ready, collect and share words/expressions as a whole class.		Support can be given to less proficient pupils depending on their needs, such as by providing vocabulary to use in the speaking activities, or sentence starters and model sentence constructions to help the pupil produce sentences. For additional differentiation strategies, please refer to the provided list of differentiation strategies and select appropriate strategy /strategies based on the needs of the pupils.
Complementary Skill Speaking 2.1 Communicate information, ideas, opinions and feelings intelligibly on familiar topics	Complementary Skill Speaking 2.1.4 Explain and justify own point of view			

Figure 1 is an excerpt from the Form Four Scheme of Work. It is the first lesson in the SOW that the teachers are required to carry out in the Form Four classes. The lesson requires teachers to focus on reading as the main skill and speaking as complementary skill. This is an hour lesson and the suggested materials for the teachers are the textbook with the designated page number given in the fourth column of the SOW. The outline also suggests differentiation strategies that teachers may or may not use in their lesson.

This is a one-hour lesson divided into three phases namely, pre-lesson, lesson delivery and post-lesson. All the phases come with suggestions of activities based on the textbook which teachers may implement. However, teachers are not restricted to the SOW, they are free to design their own activities based on their own creativity as long as the activities are in line with the content and learning standards. Teachers generally carry out their lessons based on the suggestions given in the SOW so as not to deviate from the content and learning standards which are the small branches of curriculum objectives. Therefore, this study investigates the extent of English language teachers' understanding of curriculum implementation in Malaysian secondary English language classrooms through the cascade training that they had attended.

1.3 Problem Statement

The English Language Education Roadmap (2015 – 2025) has been in implementation since 2016. The current CEFR-aligned KSSM English language syllabus for secondary schools is being used extensively at all levels in the Malaysian educational institutions (Sindhu et al., 2018). To execute the implementation of the English language curriculum effectively, professional development courses in cascade training modes were conducted. So that, teachers will be well-equipped with the knowledge of implementing the curriculum.

Firstly, despite having started its implementation in 2016 with extensive trainings for teachers, studies have shown that teachers are still unable to fully understand the CEFR-aligned curriculum for classroom implementations (Abidin & Hashim, 2021; Yin and Ahmad, 2021). Teachers' insufficient understanding the CEFR-aligned curriculum may hinder their ability to effectively deliver the content (Abidin &

Hashim, 2021; Singh et al., 2021; Sidhu et al., 2018). This is further reinforced by Uri and Aziz (2018), where only 10.3% of the respondents of their study indicated that they were able to deliver the content of the lessons based on the CEFR-aligned English language curriculum effectively. Teachers' lack of understanding of the curriculum in the aspects of curriculum implementation that has been identified are; their struggle with comprehending the CEFR levels and how to effectively integrate them into lesson planning, particularly in aligning activities with students' proficiency as well as carrying out the lessons in their classrooms with appropriate assessment practices (Uri & Aziz, 2018). It also further leads to inconsistencies in classroom instruction (Uri & Aziz 2018; Yusoff et al,2022). Besides, the lack of understanding has also led to the misinterpretation of the curriculum at its implementation stage which led to misaligning the skills and pupils' language proficiency which affected their classroom practices (Darmi et al., 2017). Moreover, there has been insufficient attention paid to how the CEFR-aligned curriculum is put into practice in the classroom (Aziz et al., 2018; Uri & Aziz, 2018; Mohtar & Sadhasivam, 2022; Uri, 2023; Marzaini et al., 2023). Therefore, there is a gap in terms of the practical application of the CEFR-aligned curriculum in secondary schools (Sidhu et al., 2018; Kaur et al.,2024). This is an important aspect because without understanding how the curriculum is being put into practice, it is difficult to determine its effectiveness and whether it is achieving its intended outcomes (Bedmar & Byram, 2018). Therefore, teachers' comprehensibility of the curriculum needs to be explored to identify the extent of their understanding in the implementation of the curriculum in classrooms.

Secondly, the main aim of the cascade training is to familiarise teachers with the content of the CEFR-aligned curriculum and help teachers to implement the curriculum in the classroom by aligning their classroom teaching and learning practices to the curriculum (Marzaini et al., 2023; Kaur et al., 2024). The cascade training should have had changed teachers' classroom approach to enable them to implement the curriculum effectively according to the CEFR framework, but studies show otherwise (Sidhu et al., 2018; Marzaini et al., 2023; uri & Aziz; 2018). In classroom this has led into teachers' unable to match the levels of students and appropriate lesson (Darmi et. Al., 2021). Besides, teachers are also unable to use proper methodology in classroom practices (Abidin & Hashim, 2021). This also leads to lack of proper planning for the lesson according to the curriculum (Yin & Ahmad, 2021). This shows, the cascade training did not really have effect, on teachers who were given training at the school or district levels as the information became diluted when it reached to the last level of cascading (Abidin & Hashim, 2021; Alih et al., 2021; Aziz et al., 2018). The cascade trainings were further diluted at school levels, where the school level training that were supposedly carried out for 18 hours were conducted for only six hours which affected its quality and teachers' understanding (Yusoff et al., 2022).

Furthermore, Aziz et al., (2018) and Marziani et al., (2023a) found that the cascade trainings were done in a rushed and unorganised manner that affected teachers' understanding of the curriculum. Teachers who attended cascade training felt that they lacked the understanding, and it affected their classroom practices (Sidhu et al., 2018). With so much being said, what do teachers really understand about the curriculum through the cascade trainings and how they are applying the knowledge in their

classroom practices is something that worth to be explored further. Besides, most studies only reveal teachers' understanding of the curriculum in general but not at the implementation level even after attending the cascade training (Ong & Tajuddin, 2021; Sidhu et al., 2018; Uri & Aziz, 2018; Yusoff et al., 2022). Therefore, the relationship between teachers' understanding of the CEFR-aligned English language curriculum through the cascade professional development courses and their classroom practices is a gap that need to be studied for the success of curriculum implementation in Malaysia (Bedmar & Byram, 2018).

Thirdly, poor comprehension of the curriculum by the teachers lead to the failure of curriculum implementation (Orafi & Borg, 2009; Bantwini, 2010; Ozturk & Aydin, 2019; Barrot, 2019; Lai, 2022; Orafi, 2022; Uri 2023). The English language education in Malaysia has been through several reforms since post-independence period and the implementation of the KBSR and KBSM curriculum was among the longest (Aziz et al, 2018). The implementation failure of the KBSM English language curriculum has been attributed by several education experts to the teachers' insufficient comprehension of the Communicative Language Teaching Method (CLT), a vital component of the KBSM English language syllabus (Aziz et al., 2018; Azman; 2016; Musa et al., 2012). Teachers' inadequate comprehension was caused by limited exposure and training on the curriculum. (Azman, 2016; Chong & Yamat, 2021; Lee et al., 2022; Ling & Iksan, 2019; Kok & Aziz, 2019; Lo 2018; Uri & Aziz, 2019; Marzaini et al.,2023). This had led teachers to resort to teach for examination instead of focussing on building the language skills (Chong & Yamat, 2021; Kok & Aziz, 2019; Ling & Iksan, 2019; Lo 2018; Uri & Aziz, 2019). Therefore, to ensure the success of the CEFR-aligned English language curriculum, we have to learn from the

past failures (Rahman, 2014; Ong & Tajuddin, 2021; Bakar et al., 2021; Yakovleva, 2021). It is important to look into teachers' understanding and its implementation to ensure that they do not go off the track in their classroom practices due to lack of understanding of the curriculum and its implementation.

Finally, several studies suggested that intervention is important in enabling teachers for effective curriculum implementation (Lo, 2018; Sidhu et al., 2018; Yasin & Yamat, 2021). In order to ensure effective implementation of the curriculum, it is first important to listen to the teachers' voices in regard to the CEFR-aligned curriculum implementation and listen to their suggestions for improvisation for a better training and curriculum implementation (Sukri et al., 2017; Kassim & Hashim, 2024; Majid et al., 2024). This would further help to identify the areas where teachers require intervention or further training. This will enable targeted support and intervention to be provided to teachers, facilitating the effective implementation of the curriculum. At the same time, it is also important to identify the improvements that needs to be done in the cascade training, so that future trainings can be done effectively taking into considerations on the shortcomings that was faced in the previous years.

The first cycle of the implementation will come to end in the year 2025. Thus, it is crucial to determine the specific areas where teachers need intervention to strengthen the implementation of the CEFR-aligned English language curriculum in the subsequent phase post-2025. By identifying these areas, appropriate measures can be taken to address the gaps in teacher knowledge and skills, and cascade training improvements which will ultimately lead to more effective implementation of the curriculum.

The lack of understanding of curriculum among teachers could hinder the implementation of the curriculum in classrooms, leading to inadequate preparation of students for the demands of the 21st century. Therefore, it is essential to investigate the extent of teachers' understanding of the curriculum, its relationship with the cascade training, and how this affects classroom practices. Based on the problem statements, the research objectives for this study are drawn.

1.4 Research Objectives

The objectives of this study are to:

- a) Explore how teachers understand the implementation of the CEFR-aligned English language curriculum for secondary schools through the cascade trainings that they have attended.
- b) Understand the extent to which cascade training has helped teachers in the implementation of their lessons.
- c) Provide suggestions to stakeholders to improve cascade training to develop better teacher understanding of the CEFR-aligned English language curriculum for secondary schools.
- d) Provide recommendations to other teachers to improve classroom practices in line with the CEFR-aligned English language curriculum for secondary schools.

1.5 Research Questions

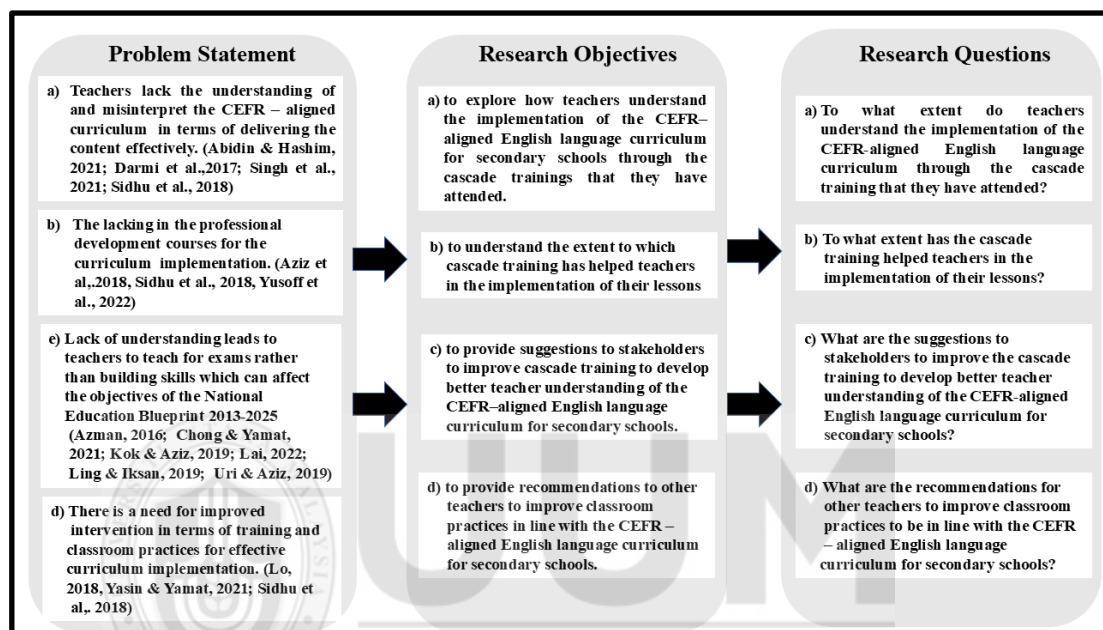
The research questions that are intended to be answered through this study would be:

- a) To what extent do teachers understand the implementation of the CEFR-aligned English language curriculum through the cascade training that they have attended?
- b) To what extent has the cascade training helped teachers in the implementation of their lessons?
- c) What are the suggestions to stakeholders to improve the cascade training to develop better teacher understanding of the CEFR-aligned English language curriculum for secondary schools?
- d) What are the recommendations for other teachers to improve classroom practices to be in line with the CEFR-aligned English language curriculum for secondary schools?

In Figure 2, the primary components of the study are concisely presented, including the problem statement, research objectives, and research questions.

Figure 2

The Summary of Problem Statement, Research Objectives and Research Questions of the Study

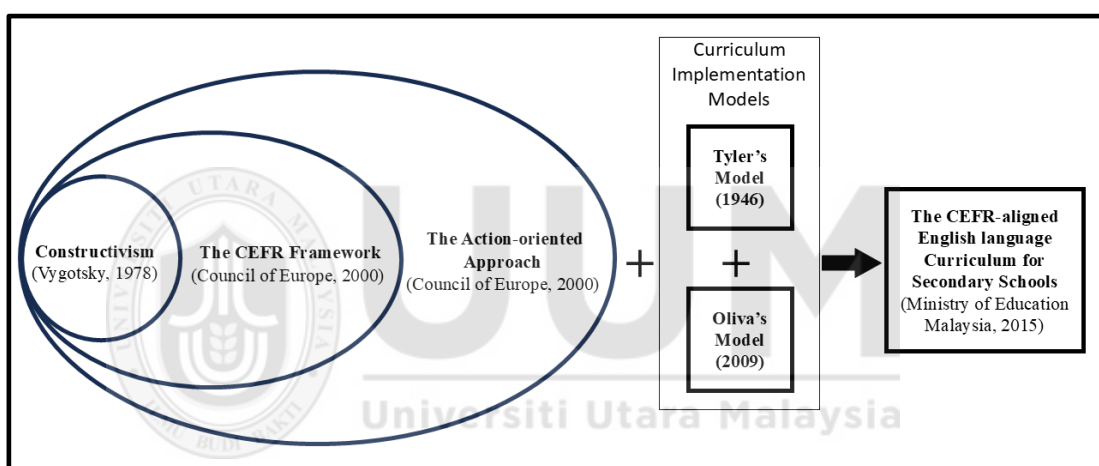


1.6 Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework in Figure 3 shows how constructivist theory underpins the CEFR-aligned English language curriculum used in the Malaysian secondary schools. Rooted in constructivism (Vygotsky, 1978), the framework emphasises that knowledge is actively constructed by learners through experience and social interaction. In language learning, this means students learn best by using language in meaningful contexts.

Figure 3

The Theoretical Framework of the Study



The Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR), developed by the Council of Europe in 2000, builds on constructivist ideas. It provides a structured approach to describing language proficiency across levels, focusing on practical skills and communicative competence. Instead of assessing isolated grammar skills, the CEFR emphasises what learners can do with language in real-life contexts, aligning with constructivist principles of active, contextualised learning (Ministry of Education Malaysia, 2020; Council of Europe, 2000). Besides, language learning takes place according to learners' language proficiency levels as prescribed in the CEFR framework (Council of Europe, 2000).

Embedded within the CEFR is the Action-Oriented Approach (AOA), which views learners as social agents using language to accomplish real-world tasks (Council of Europe, 2017). The teacher's role in this approach is to plan, design and structure tasks that reflect authentic language use, create opportunities for interaction, and provide scaffolding to support learners' engagement as well as assess learning in a meaningful way (Council of Europe, 2020). Teachers also encourage students to collaborate, problem-solve, and reflect on their language use, fostering autonomy and deeper understanding (Council of Europe, 2020).

The Tyler's (1946) and Oliva's (2009) curriculum implementation models provide foundational frameworks for curriculum implementation processes. These processes are very much in tandem with the current CEFR aligned English language curriculum. Besides, the relevance of Tyler's and Oliva's models to the study lies in their foundational principles, which address key aspects of curriculum implementation, and teacher understanding and engagement (Bhuttah, et al., 2019). These models provide the theoretical grounding necessary to explore how teachers interpret, adapt, and apply the CEFR-aligned curriculum within their contexts.

The CEFR-aligned English language curriculum developed by Malaysia's Ministry of Education (2015) applies these principles to improve English proficiency among secondary students. This curriculum encourages students to engage in meaningful language use, helping them develop functional communication skills (Ministry of Education Malaysia, 2015). Through this alignment, Malaysian students are prepared to meet international standards of language proficiency, with an emphasis on practical, communicative abilities (Ministry of Education Malaysia, 2015).

This study focusses on teachers' understanding of curriculum implementation based on the CEFR- aligned English language curriculum. Teachers' understanding of the curriculum implementation is closely connected to the CEFR-aligned English language curriculum that is derived from the CEFR framework which has its fundamental basis from constructivism (Ministry of Education Malaysia, 2015). Besides, teachers' classroom practices based on the curriculum should largely aligned with the Action-oriented approach which has its basis from the CEFR framework that comes from constructivism (Ministry of Education Malaysia, 2020).

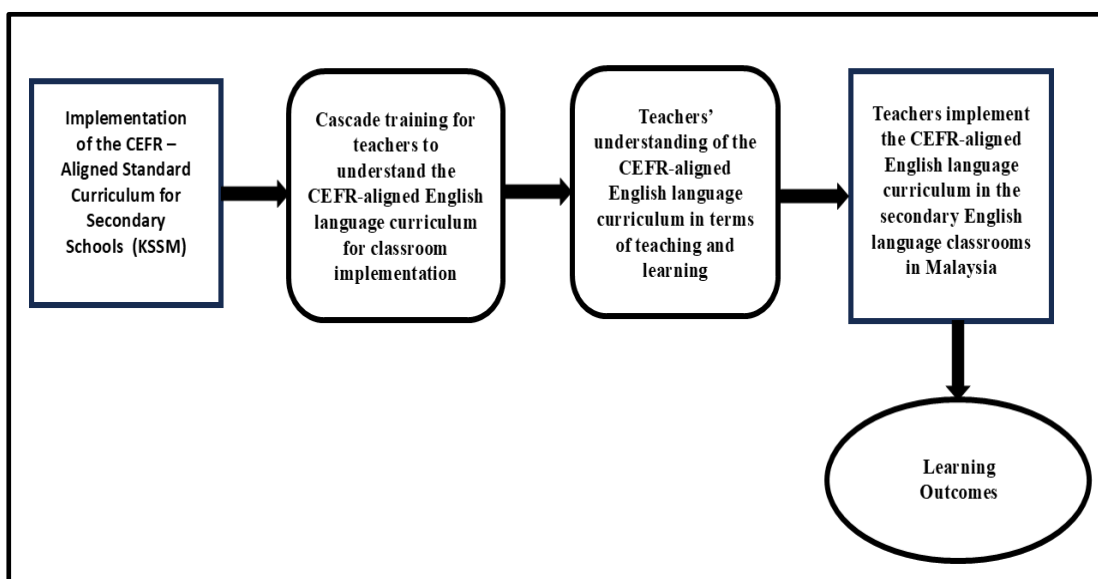
1.7 Conceptual Framework

The primary aspect of the study emphasises teachers' understanding of the curriculum and its execution. Teachers' understanding of the curriculum, derived from the cascade training sessions that they have attended, ought to be evident in their classroom practices. Teachers' understanding of the curriculum should be aligned with the CEFR-aligned curriculum which has its fundamental from constructivism and classroom practices which are focussing on Action-oriented approach.

Constructivism and Action-oriented approach being base for the CEFR-aligned English language curriculum, this study seeks teachers' comprehension and implementation of the CEFR-aligned English language curriculum. It investigates whether teachers, after receiving cascade training, are able to apply their lessons which are based on constructivist theory and action-oriented approach in their teaching practices, thereby fostering language development in their lessons.

Figure 4

Conceptual Framework for the Study.



The conceptual framework for this study provides a structured lens to explore how teachers navigate the complexities of implementing the curriculum in their classrooms as shown in figure 4. This framework highlights the interrelation between curriculum introduction, teacher training, understanding, and classroom implementation. This, ultimately leading to measurable learning outcomes.

The process begins with the implementation of the CEFR-aligned Standard Curriculum for Secondary Schools (KSSM). This curriculum represents Malaysia's commitment to enhancing English language education by adopting the globally recognised CEFR framework (Ministry of Education Malaysia, 2020). Its goal is to establish a standardised approach to English teaching, focusing on clear language proficiency benchmarks (Ministry of Education Malaysia, 2015a).

To support this implementation, the cascade training model is introduced as a mechanism for disseminating knowledge about the curriculum (Ministry of Education

Malaysia, 2020). In this training model, master trainers are equipped with a deep understanding of the CEFR-aligned curriculum and tasked with training other teachers in a hierarchical manner. This ensures that all teachers receive the necessary guidance and resources to adapt to the curriculum's expectations. However, this study seeks to examine not just the efficacy of the cascade training but how teachers internalise and make sense of the training content.

The next stage of the framework focuses on teachers' understanding of the curriculum in terms of teaching and learning. This study investigates how teachers perceive and interpret the CEFR principles in the curriculum and whether the cascade training effectively equips them with the skills needed for classroom practice. Teachers' understanding directly influences their ability to align lesson planning, teaching strategies, and assessment practices with the curriculum's goals (Ministry of Education Malaysia, 2015).

Finally, the framework addresses the implementation of the curriculum in classrooms, where teachers put their understanding into practice. The study seeks to capture teachers' narratives about the challenges and successes they face during this stage, shedding light on the interplay between cascade training, understanding, and application. The ultimate aim is to explore how these efforts translate into classroom practices that align with the CEFR standards, reflecting the curriculum's effectiveness. This framework thus provides a holistic approach to understanding the experiences of teachers in this implementation journey.

1.8 Limitations

This study acknowledges its inherent limitations, which are set to ensure both the integrity of the findings and the accuracy of the interpretations. First, the study limits its sample to eight participants, all of whom are required to be the heads of English language panels within their respective institutions. Additionally, each participant must have attended at least two cascade training sessions related to the CEFR-aligned English language curriculum. This selection criterion is crucial to ensure that the participants possess a solid foundation to provide informed insights into the curriculum's implementation. Without this level of training, participants may lack the necessary knowledge and understanding to contribute meaningful input, potentially compromising the quality of the data and the validity of the study's conclusions (Merriam & Tisdell, 2018).

Furthermore, the data for this study is collected from a single district. Although qualitative research often benefits from broader samples, Denzin and Lincoln (2011) emphasise that focussing on a single district can offer in-depth, context-specific insights that might otherwise be overlooked in larger, more generalised studies. By concentrating on a single district, this research seeks to provide a more detailed and nuanced understanding of the curriculum's impact, tailored to the unique context and conditions of the district in question. This localised approach allows the researcher to explore the specific ways in which the cascade training has been implemented and its effects on the teaching practices of the heads of English panels.

Besides, this study also does not require the involvement of students as participants of the study as it is looking into the understanding and implementation of the curriculum

in terms of teaching and learning practices from teachers' perspectives only. Moreover, this perspective allows the study to critically examine the effectiveness of the cascade training model, as experienced by teachers. It seeks to uncover whether this model sufficiently prepares educators for the demands of the curriculum or whether gaps exist between training and practical application. By isolating teachers' voices, the study can offer valuable recommendations for refining training practices, enhancing teacher support, and ultimately ensuring more effective implementation.

It is also important to note that the district selected for this study has consistently adhered to the cascade training guidelines and successfully conducted cascade training for teachers at all levels (Singh et al., 2021). This ensures that the findings of the study are grounded in a context where the intended curriculum delivery model has been properly executed. The rigour in adhering to these standards contributes to the reliability and validity of the findings, reinforcing the overall quality of the study.

1.9 Definition of Terms

The terms shown, will be applied extensively in this study. Therefore, it is important to define them so that it gives a clear picture on the scope of this study.

1.9.1 Teachers

Refers to the English language teachers who are also the Head of the English language panels teaching at the secondary schools in Malaysia. These teachers have qualifications in fields such as TESL (Teaching English as a Second Language), TESOL (Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages), or other related disciplines within the realm of English language teaching (Ministry of Education,

2015). The reason the study is focussing on the Head of the English language panels because they are the middle leaders who received the cascade training at the last level before the information being disseminated to their respective schools (Ministry of Education, 2020). Their understanding is very important as the teachers in their schools will be gaining the knowledge and information from the training that they have received. The head of the panels for this study should have attended at least two professional development workshops on curriculum implementation based on the KSSM English language curriculum for secondary schools.

1.9.2 Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR)

The Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) is a global standard for assessing language proficiency, ranging from A1 (beginner) to C2 (proficient) (Council of Europe, 2020). It provides a comprehensive framework for teaching, learning, and assessment (Council of Europe, 2020). In Malaysia, the CEFR-aligned English curriculum was introduced under KSSM to enhance language competency. Textbooks, assessments, and teaching strategies are structured based on CEFR levels to ensure a systematic progression of skills (Ministry of Education Malaysia, 2015). This alignment aims to improve students' communicative abilities, preparing them for academic, professional, and global communication needs (Ministry of Education Malaysia, 2015).

1.9.3 Secondary English Language Classrooms

Secondary English language classrooms in this study refers to the government secondary schools in Malaysia where the CEFR-aligned KSSM English language curriculum for secondary schools is being implemented (Ministry of Education, 2015).

In the context of this study, the researcher refers to both lower and upper secondary classroom.

1.9.4 Curriculum

In this study, the term "curriculum" refers to the official body of knowledge chosen by the Ministry of Education Malaysia for implementation in secondary school classrooms, which is the CEFR-aligned KSSM English language curriculum for secondary schools (Ministry of Education, 2020). The implementation of the curriculum began in 2016 and has been in implementation till today.

1.9.5 Curriculum Implementation

Curriculum implementation refers to the stage where the curriculum is put into effect or practised as an educational programme (Fullan & Promfret, 1977; Fullan & Park, 1981). In this study, the curriculum implementation refers to the implementation of the CEFR-aligned KSSM English language curriculum for secondary schools which came into practise in 2016 (Ministry of Education, 2015b). In this study, the element of curriculum implementation that will be in focus is the teaching and learning of the content of the curriculum.

1.9.6 Teachers' Understanding

In this study, the term 'teachers' understanding', refers to the extent English language teachers understand the CEFR-aligned KSSM English language curriculum based on the training they have had on the curriculum implementation and how this affects the teaching and learning practices in their classrooms (Bedmar & Byram, 2019). The aspects of teachers' understanding of the curriculum in terms of classroom practices

that will be examined in this study are the setting of language learning objectives, designing contents for the lesson, creating learning experiences as well as evaluating of pupils' language learning proficiency through teaching and learning practices. These four elements that are covered in curriculum documents are what the element of teachers' understanding that is being explored in this study.

1.9.7 Cascade Training

The phrases 'cascade training' refers to the training sessions related to the dissemination of knowledge of the CEFR-aligned English language curriculum for teachers throughout Malaysia (Ministry of Education, Malaysia, 2015). The training for the implementation of the curriculum was done in a cascade mode which is an effective method to disseminate knowledge or information to a larger group.

1.10 Significance of the Study

1.10.1 Ministry of Education

It is expected that the findings of this study would provide relevant input to the Ministry of Education, Malaysia on the implementation of the CEFR-aligned KSSM English language curriculum. The insights obtained from this study will be beneficial for the Ministry of Education in devising strategies to enhance the implementation of the KSSM English language curriculum for secondary schools following the completion of the current cycle in 2025.

1.10.2 Teachers

The outcome of the current study can be referred by teachers in future to reflect on their own teaching practices as well as for further studies on curriculum

implementation in their own environment as to understand whether their practice is aligned. This would also be a steppingstone for teachers to further improvise their own practices as to remain relevant in terms of curriculum implementation.

1.10.3 Pupils

The purpose of curriculum changes in the secondary schools in 2015 was largely to improve language proficiency among pupils so that they would effectively strive in the global job market in future. This study will help to improve pupils' language proficiency towards the ideal target when the curriculum implementation processes are in line with the curriculum.

1.10.4 School Specialist Coaches/Trainers (SISC+)

This study would provide valuable insights into how teachers interpret and implement curriculum in the secondary English language classrooms. This understanding is crucial for SISC+s as they can use this information to identify gaps in teachers' understanding of the curriculum and to offer focussed assistance to address these gaps. Besides, they will also be able to provide in service training programmes that are catered to the needs of the teachers based on this study.

1.10.5 The Theories

As this study adopts constructivism and action – oriented approach, it will be able to identify areas where teachers struggle to implement the curriculum in line with CEFR and the study can suggest new directions for research and theory development in English language teaching and learning. Viewing the study from the constructivists' perspectives, it will be able to provide insights into creating a more learner-centred

classroom environment that can create avenues for students to participate in inquiry – based and collaborative learning that are targeted to improve language proficiency in English language classrooms.

1.11 Background of the Researcher

The researcher is an English language Master teacher in a secondary school in Ipoh, Perak. He has 20 years' experience in the field of English language teaching. The researcher completed a Bachelor of Education degree with a major in Information Technology and a minor in TESL. Additionally, the researcher acquired a master's degree in TESOL. Before teaching in Perak, the researcher taught in Bintulu, Sarawak for nine years. The researcher plays an active role in the field of English language teaching in Malaysia as a national level master trainer, module writer, examiner for SPM English language papers. Besides, he had also authored revision books for secondary school learners focussing on the English language. The researcher had also travelled far and wide and worked in an array of collaborative programmes at national and international level.

Being a national level master trainer for secondary schools since 2016, the researcher had conducted professional development courses for teachers all over Malaysia. He had conducted courses to familiarise teachers with CEFR framework as well as the implementation of the CEFR-aligned KSSM curriculum from form 1 to form 5. At several instances the researcher was also hand – picked to become observer for professional development courses conducted at state levels. The opportunities he had as a master trainer and observer gave him access to interact with teachers from different school backgrounds and observe classroom lessons as well as discuss

teachers' understanding of the curriculum extensively. These opportunities have become an advantage for the researcher to work with research participants for this study.

The researcher had also gained his credibility to conduct qualitative research while pursuing his master's degree which was a qualitative study that gave him the experience of interviewing teachers. He had also developed his knowledge by reading books on qualitative research which gave him insights on qualitative data collection and interviewing.

The researcher's interest to pursue his research in the current topic stemmed from his experience of witnessing teachers' vague understanding and classroom practices through the school visits. Though he conducted the professional development courses on the CEFR – aligned curriculum at national level, the classroom practices at schools did not reflect the objectives outlined in the courses. This has become the reason for the researcher to pursue this study to understand the extent of teachers' understanding of the curriculum and how they are implementing it in the classroom.

The researcher believes that his experience as a national master trainer who has been an integral part of the CEFR-aligned KSSM English language curriculum implementation and his experience conducting qualitative studies together with his accolades gained through his 20 years of teaching experience would allow him to successfully complete this study. Through this study, the researcher intends to provide a proper guideline for trainers and teachers for the improvisation of training on the content and other areas that require improvisation for curriculum implementation

cascade training. Besides, the researcher also intends to provide manual for teachers to learn how to navigate their lessons in accordance with the curriculum guide so that classroom lessons are in line with the curriculum documents.

Finally, the researcher hopes that the suggestions and recommendations that will be given from this study can be used as guidelines for effective professional development for teachers' understanding of curriculum and ways for effective practices in classrooms.

1.12 Summary

This chapter outlines the necessity for the current study, emphasising the challenges and concerns within the research field. The researcher has formulated research objectives and questions based on the issues. Besides, the researcher has also shared some information to shed light on the actual issues related to teacher understanding and implementation of curriculum. In chapter 2, the researcher will provide a range of literature to support this study, along with explanations of the key concepts and the underpinned theories.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

In this chapter, a comprehensive review of theoretical foundations and pertinent literature associated with the CEFR-aligned curriculum and teachers' understanding of the curriculum, as informed by the cascade training, will be conducted. Based on preceding empirical and conceptual studies, this review will explore the implementation of the English language curriculum in Malaysia. This review will encompass the execution of the CEFR-aligned KSSM English language curriculum for secondary schools within the Malaysian context. It will also examine the importance of teachers' understanding of the curriculum and the crucial factors that are recognised to either facilitate or impede the implementation of the curriculum in classrooms. Additionally, the review will examine the influence of the curriculum dissemination process and the effects of its application in the classroom setting.

2.2 The English language Education RoadMap (2013 – 2025)

The English Language Education Roadmap (2015 – 2025) was rolled out as part of the Malaysian Education Blueprint (2013 – 2025) in 2015. It outlines the reform in the English language Education that was set to take off in 2016. The roadmap is a reform agenda that provides insights into the past failures, details of English language illiteracies in Malaysia, the problems with the current practices and a detailed guideline and information that was set to take off in the next ten years to overcome the shortcomings in the English language education in Malaysia. The improvements included in the reform agenda are as followed:

- a) Systematic guide for teacher training practices.
- b) English language syllabus that is benchmarked.
- c) Teaching materials aligned to the assessment and syllabus.
- d) Assessments that is designed to assess all the skills necessary in the English language.
- e) Teaching guidelines for teachers according to the curriculum/syllabus
- f) Textbooks aligned with the syllabus.
- g) Aligning teaching practice with the curriculum.

(Ministry of Education, Malaysia, 2015)

In 2013, the English Language Standards and Quality Council (ELSQC) was established to ensure the quality of the English language education is not compromised and to purview that all the agendas listed in the reform are carried out accordingly.

It played the key role in developing The English Language Education Roadmap 2015 – 2025. Pioneered by Professor Dr. Zuraidah Md. Don, it is an independent panel consisting of 10 members who are English language experts from various organisations such as schools, professional bodies, universities, and retired teachers (Ministry of Education, Malaysia, 2015).

The ELSQC was formed to carry out a significant mission in developing the Roadmap and also to foresee the plan, development and execution of the CEFR-aligned English language curriculum which was introduced in 2016. The ELSQC has been playing the following roles since its inception:

- a) Developing the CEFR-aligned KSSM English language curriculum.
- b) Coordinating the implementation of the curriculum with the advice of Cambridge English.
- c) Coordinating the training of master trainers to communicate the new knowledge to teachers nationwide.
- d) Conducting research, data collection and documentation from time to time on the implementation of the CEFR-aligned KSSM Curriculum.
- e) Ensuring that the Curriculum Development Centre (CDC), MOE and the Board of Examination work together to ensure the curriculum matches the assessment.

(Ministry of Education, Malaysia, 2015)

2.3 Understanding the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR)

The Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR) works as a guidance for the development of English language curriculum in terms of the language syllabus, curriculum guidelines, assessments, and textbook (Council of Europe, 2017). It was developed and have been widely used in and across Europe since the 1970s. To date, 45 countries around the world including Singapore and China are using this framework in their English language curriculum (Council of Europe, 2017). The CEFR framework offers a detailed outline of the learning expectations for the students, so that they would be able to use the language effectively (Council of Europe, 2001; Piccardo, 2020). The framework furnishes a comprehensive guide on the acquisition of the knowledge and skills necessary for learners to proficiently utilise the four primary skills namely, reading, speaking, listening, and writing (Council of Europe, 2001; Harsh & Malone, 2020; Piccardo, 2020).

On the other hand, the CEFR is also developed with the intention to overcome lack of communication skills among the professionals in the working world with the focus is entirely on developing language skills in the field of modern languages (Council of Europe, 2001). It provides various educational personnel such as curriculum developers, teachers, educational administrators as well as course designers a chance to contemplate their own practices to cater to the requirements of language learners that would suit from one generation to another. With this the aims and objectives of CEFR framework are as shown below:

- a) To provide a guide to develop curriculum on developing language skills.
- b) To enable language learners to master the language learnt from the most basic to the native speaker equivalent.
- c) To provide a support for curriculum to develop language curriculum.
- d) To provide support for teachers to develop their lessons.
- e) To provide a guide to develop assessment based on the curriculum and classroom lessons.
- f) To develop communicative language skills among learners to be able to compete in the globalised world with English language as the most used language.

(Council of Europe, 2001)

2.3.1 Why CEFR for the Malaysian English Language Curriculum?

The CEFR framework is adapted into the Malaysian curriculum development to form the CEFR-aligned KSSM English language curriculum for secondary schools. This is because ideally the CEFR framework consists of processes that are designed to develop skills and knowledge in a language effectively using stages which start from the basic A1 till the advanced level known as C2 (Council of Europe 2001). These

stages are given vivid descriptions that will help learners who are learning a language will be able to develop their language proficiency in stages and gradually (Council of Europe, 2001). The CEFR framework covers the four modes of language use in written and oral form, or both: production, reception, mediation and interaction. The descriptors that are used in the framework despite being developed in the 1970s, are still relevant, that they are being adapted in many countries where English language needs to be revamped (Abi, 2021; Foley, 2019; Foley, 2019a; Lee, 2020; Masashi, 2012). This includes Malaysia. Besides, the CEFR framework is also constantly updated and upgraded by the Council of Europe (Council of Europe, 2020).

The CEFR framework is not a curriculum or a learning checklist to improve grammar and vocabulary (Council of Europe, 2001). Instead, it provides guidelines on how a language curriculum can be developed accordingly. It is not limited to the development of the English language curriculum only but can be applied to the development of other languages as well. The CEFR framework is also used to develop curriculum and curriculum content using the local context and purposes, which shows that it is a flexible framework that can be used to develop a local language learning syllabus and curriculum based on the local context (Ahmad et al., 2019).

Besides, the descriptors in the CEFR framework allow learners to characterise their practice of the language based on the ‘can do’ statements which are very practical and clearly understandable. The CEFR-aligned curriculum is geared towards the ‘can do’ statements which would enable students to master the language at the level that it is taught according to the ‘can do’ statements that are aligned to it (Council of Europe, 2001).

On the other hand, curriculums that are designed based on the CEFR framework uses action-oriented approaches where the language ability of the learner is developed using various kinds of cognitive knowledge, processes and strategies (Council of Europe, 2017). Learners are expected to utilise the language in accordance with the provided context, be it for reading, writing, listening, or speaking when engaging in the learning activities so that mastery of the language can be obtained (Krishnan & Yunus, 2019; Lee & Kassim, 2020; Nawawi et al., 2021; Selvaraj & Aziz, 2019). Besides, classroom language activities that are carried out in the CEFR-aligned language syllabus is measured through formative assessments through writing, reading, speaking and listening activities (Council of Europe, 2001).

The CEFR-aligned KSSM English language curriculum for secondary schools that has been designed in Malaysia has taken into consideration how this framework can be used in Malaysia to help learners in Malaysia at all stages to master the language effectively. Hence, the Malaysian English language revamp occurred. The transformation process began from pre-school till tertiary level (Ministry of Education, Malaysia, 2015).

2.3.2 CEFR-aligned KSSM Curriculum Implementation in Malaysia

English language education has been an important aspect of Malaysia's educational system for decades, and the execution of a new curriculum to bring significant transformations in the approach to teaching English in schools was done in several phases. In fact, the implementation of the CEFR-aligned KSSM curriculum was not a drastic move. The ELSQC, an autonomous organisation under the Ministry of Education tasked with overseeing the standard of English language education in

Malaysia, collaborated with Cambridge English (CE) to play an essential role in facilitating the successful execution of the curriculum.

In order to work on developing the new English language curriculum, a baseline data collection was carried out throughout Malaysia from the year 2011 till 2013 (Ministry of Education, Malaysia, 2015), which revealed the flip-flops in the English language curriculum that led to the paucity of mastery among students at various levels in Malaysia. The baseline study was utilised by the ELSQC and Cambridge English to develop the CEFR-aligned KSSM English language curriculum by placing suitable descriptors at various levels of learning from pre-school till teacher education and tertiary level (Don, et al., 2015).

The first phase (2012 – 2016) towards curriculum implementation was the introduction of CEFR to the English language teachers in Malaysia and to elevate English language proficiency among teachers through cascade training courses and setting requirements for teachers to take English language test to ensure teacher quality (Don, et al., 2015). Teachers who obtained less than the desired proficiency levels were required to attend professional development courses to improve their English language proficiency. The reason for this measure to be the first was based on the experiences of other countries which had difficulty in executing the language policies due to the teachers lacking in their proficiency. Based on the curriculum implementation experiences from other countries such as China (Tan & Reyes, 2016), Thailand (Hiranburana, 2020) and also Japan (Moser, 2015) it was found that teacher proficiency was being a challenge in the implementation of a new English language curriculum in these countries. Hence,

initiative by ELSQC to develop teacher proficiency as the first step in implementing the English language reform agenda is a welcoming move (Savski, 2019).

The second phase of the implementation was the alignment of the English language Curriculum with the CEFR descriptors. The ELSQC at this level selected international textbooks which are aligned to the CEFR framework (Don, et al., 2015). The books were chosen in accordance with the descriptors that were set for the language proficiency that was targeted for the learners at various levels. At this stage teachers were all expected to be aware in the change of the curriculum and was also sent for curriculum induction courses on how to find a connection in the curriculum, textbooks and classroom teaching as well as assessment (Ahmad et al., 2019). The implementation of the new English language curriculum in the secondary schools began in 2016.

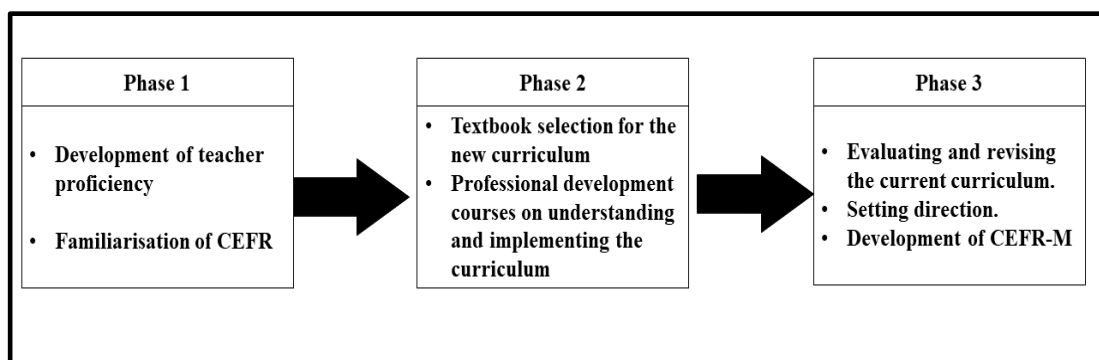
The phase three will be an evaluation phase where the ELSQC will work towards developing the CEFR-M after reviewing, evaluating, and revising the current practices. At this point, we will be ready to work independently without the guidance of Cambridge English and will be able to elevate the descriptors a little higher as well as be able to produce our own CEFR-aligned textbooks. This process supposed to start taking place in the year 2025 (Don et al., 2015; Lee et al., 2022).

The three phases that details the implementation of the CEFR-aligned English language curriculum show that the reform agenda is not a flip-flop policy that would ruin the future of the English language education in Malaysia (Azman, 2016). Instead, without any political pressure, the ELSQC operates independently to ensure the

restoration of English language education in Malaysia to its former glory. The three phases of the CEFR-aligned curriculum implementation in Malaysia are summarised and shown in Figure 5.

Figure 5

Phases of CEFR-aligned curriculum implementation in Malaysia



2.3.3 Challenges in Adapting the CEFR-aligned KSSM English Language Curriculum in Malaysia

Although the CEFR-aligned KSSM curriculum may seem to be as ideal as it is, there are challenges that need to be addressed in its implementation. The first possible challenge is the execution of the curriculum in classroom. Uri et al. (2018) stated in their research that teachers perceived that they were compelled to embrace the new curriculum. The study involved 331 English language teachers from secondary schools in Malaysia and it showed that quite many teachers felt that the policies introduced were quick to replace with new ones when there was a change in the ministerial post. They cited past incidents such as the implementation of *Pengajaran Dan Pembelajaran Sains Dan Matematik Dalam Bahasa Inggeris* (PPSMI) and the *Kurikulum Standard Sekolah Menengah* (KSSM) before the addition of the CEFR framework. Therefore, many teachers lack the motivation to follow up with the new changes. Besides, the English teacher proficiency tests such as the CEFR-Readiness

test as well as British Council English proficiency test, APTIS and Cambridge Proficiency Test (CPT) made many teachers to be uncomfortable as they felt it was not necessary for them to get tested as most of them are TESL/TESOL trained (Hiew, 2022; Hiew & Murray, 2018).

Teacher resistant is a critical concern in the implementation of the CEFR-aligned KSSM curriculum, as there is evident that teacher resistance could affect the curriculum implementation process (Duarte & Brewer, 2019; Underwood, 2012; Eka, 2013; Kazakbava, 2021; Madondo, 2020; Smith, 2020) The ELSQC was aware of these difficulties and planned for continuous teacher professional development courses in cascade mode for teachers at all levels. This is to ensure accurate dissemination of information and knowledge among teachers in regards to the curriculum implementation (Don et al., 2015).

On the other hand, to ensure the success of curriculum implementation, it is vital to ensure that teachers' understanding of the curriculum is aligned with their classroom practices. This is because, literature has suggested that the failure of curriculum implementations is often caused by teachers' failure to understand the curriculum well and implement it in classroom (Aksit, 2007; Bantwini, 2010; Madondo, 2020; Poedjiastutie et al., 2018; Saba, 2021; Yan, 2014).

2.4 The Theory Underpinning this Study

One of the major underpinning theories that informs this study is the constructivist theory. Constructivism is an important theory in this study. This is because the CEFR framework is built based on the theory of constructivism (Council of Europe, 2021;

Picardo & North, 2019). The CEFR framework is aligned to the KSSM English language curriculum for secondary schools. Therefore, the theory of constructivism is intricately connected to the central focus of the study which are teacher understanding and curriculum implementation. Teachers implementing the curriculum need to focus on guiding, supporting, and prompting students rather than delivering content in a traditional manner (Ministry of Education, Malaysia, 2015a) constructivism supports this role by emphasising the teacher's role in scaffolding learning and providing the appropriate level of support as students become more independent (Khaididja, 2020). Teachers' understanding of this concept shapes their instructional approaches, encouraging them to adapt to students' needs and promoting a more active and participatory classroom (Devi, 2019). If the curriculum is based on the constructivist elements, then teachers' understanding of the curriculum ties directly to the constructivists' theory (Piccardo & North, 2019).

Furthermore, the constructivist theory is the underlying theory for the language teaching methods (Council of Europe, 2021). The method applied in the curriculum is the action-oriented approach. It focuses to the development of communicative competence by developing production, reception, interaction and mediation skills in the target language (Piccardo & North, 2019; Council of Europe, 2021).

2.4.1 Theory of Constructivism

Constructivism is one of the fundamental principles of educational learning philosophies (Fosnot, 2013; Steffe & Gale, 1995; Devi, 2019). It underpins the teachers' understanding and classroom practices (Yeni & Daloglu, 2016; Khaididja 2020). Constructivism is an educational theory that proposes that knowledge is

constructed through individual experience and interaction with the environment (Steffe & Gale, 1995; Murphy 2022). According to this theory, individuals do not simply absorb information passively, but they would rather actively construct their own understanding by integrating new information with their prior knowledge and experiences (Murphy, 2022). Constructivism is related so much to this study as the CEFR-aligned English language curriculum is based on the constructivism as the CEFR- framework itself has its basis from constructivism (Council of Europe,2020). Learning English language in this curriculum is similar to how language learning is described in constructivism (Council of Europe, 2020).

According to constructivists theory, teachers' understanding of a curriculum will influence the way they create learning experiences for their pupils and the learning activities as well as tasks that are assigned to their students (Kozlowski, 2021; Yeni & Daloglu, 2016; Devi 2019). In a constructivist classroom, the teachers' role is to facilitate, rather than impart, knowledge (Bremner et al;2022). Students are given encouragement to explore, question as well as discover, and construct their own understanding through the activities and tasks given by the teacher (Kamarulzaman, 2017; Kozlowski, 2021; Siham et al., 2019). Teacher's role here is to create a nurturing learning atmosphere and act as a guide, helping students to make connections between what has been learnt and what is being learnt (Kaymakamoglu, 2018; Shah, 2019). Constructivism is vast and it has three founding fathers namely Piaget, Dewey and Vygotsky. Despite their idea of constructivism is related to learning, they are looking at different perspectives of constructivism (Ultanir, 2012).

Piaget's constructivism believes that learner's actively build their own understanding of the world. It is done by organising as well as reorganising their experiences into mental structures called schemas (Kamii & Ewing, 1996; Stupiansky,2020; Tan & Ng,2021). This means that learning should be an active process, with learners exploring and experimenting to develop their own understanding.

Whereas the Dewey's constructivism emphasises on the importance of learning through experience and active engagement with the environment. According to Dewey (1986), learning is not solely the process of acquisition of knowledge, but of actively constructing meaning and understanding through experience (Dewey, 2013; Bustamante et al., 2018; Tan & Ng, 2021). He believed that the curriculum should be based on the interests and experiences of the learner, and that learning should be integrated into learner's life every day (Dewey, 2013; Ng, 2021).

According to Vygotsky (1978), constructivism explains how a student acquires knowledge. It emphasises on the importance of social interaction and cultural context in terms of developing knowledge and understanding. It is a social activity that takes place through interactions with others who are more experienced or knowledgeable. Vygotsky's constructivism can be applied through activities that promote learner-centred techniques (Bremner et al., 2022). Learner-centred techniques are used to support learners as they work through challenging tasks and can provide avenues for learners to participate in dialogues and discussions to develop their thinking and understanding (Bremner et al., 2022). Learner-centredness is very deeply rooted in constructivism (Newmaster et al., 2006).

In terms of language education, Vygotsky's constructivism has always had a significant impact on curriculum. It has influenced the evolvement of action-oriented approach. It emphasises the importance of using the language in meaningful contexts and promoting social interaction in the classroom (Ashton, 2006; Thamarana, 2015; Szabo & Csepes, 2023).

Based on the discussion, it can be inferred that despite the three specialists discussing constructivism, their viewpoints are relatively distinct. For this study, the Vygotsky's constructivism will be referred as the fundamental principle. This is because the purpose of this study is to explore teachers' understanding and their implementation of the KSSM curriculum in the English language secondary classroom. When examining at all the three experts in the study only Vygotsky's version of constructivism has mentioned on teachers' role in knowledge development through student-centred learning. According to Vygotsky, through student-centred learning, teachers will be able to develop students' understanding through various approaches and methods that are suitable to pupils' level (Orak & Al-khresheh, 2021; Jacobs & Renandya, 2016). Besides, the CEFR-aligned curriculum and the Scheme of Work developed by the Ministry of Education Malaysia (2015a) which is widely being used in classroom practices by teachers for curriculum implementation in Malaysia has learner-centred elements where students are required to interact and collaborate in order to develop the language skills, which is very much aligned to Vygotsky's constructivism (1978).

In the aspect of the use of the constructivism theory in the teaching and learning activities, the CEFR-aligned curriculum document, requires teachers to carryout

classroom activities that are based on constructivism as the fundamental theory. The suggested activities in the KSSM Scheme of Work for the secondary schools have also outlined modifiable lessons that are based on constructivism (Ministry of Education, Malaysia, 2015a; Ministry of Education, Malaysia, 2015b; Azman, 2016).

This study focuses on teachers' understanding of the curriculum and classroom implementation of the CEFR-aligned English language curriculum and teachers have been given training on the implementation of the curriculum in the cascade mode. Teachers' ability to implement the curriculum with language development elements based on the constructivist theory would show how much teachers have understood the curriculum. In the curriculum implementation process, teachers' understanding of the curriculum is important to ensure the success of the curriculum implementation. Teachers' ability to impart the knowledge would enable the learning outcome that is desired in English language Education Roadmap 2015-2025 (Ministry of Education, Malaysia, 2015).

Looking at the aspects of constructivism in the teaching of English language, there are very limited study been conducted (Dass et al., 2021; Dass & Ferguson, 2022). Even, studies on teachers' understanding of curriculum in their classroom practices in Malaysia are still very limited (Jumaat et al., 2017; Don et al., 2015). Therefore, this study intends to explore teachers' understanding of the curriculum and classroom practices based on the fundamentals of constructivism that is found at the core of the CEFR framework that forms the CEFR-aligned curriculum in Malaysia.

Additionally, it is essential to take note that, in curriculum reforms in the 21st century, many countries have included the theory of constructivism for the implementation of their curriculum due to its nature and ability to improve language proficiency in line with the needs of 21st century (Tan, 2017; Symeonidis & Schwarz, 2016; Kumar & Kumar, 2019). This is because inquiry-based learning, problem-solving and critical thinking are part of the constructivist curriculum. They allow pupils to connect their learning experiences to the real-world contexts and develop skills that are important for the success in the 21st century, such as creativity, collaboration, and communication (Azman, 2016; Orak & Al-khresheh, 2021).

Curriculums that are based on the theory of constructivism also emphasise on the importance of diversity, inclusivity as well as cultural relevance (Gul, 2016; Murphy, 2022). This involves creating learning environments that are sensitive to the needs and experiences of all students. Students should also be given opportunities to explore their own perspectives (Kumar & Kumar, 2019). Besides, technology has also been included in the curriculum reforms that are based on the theory of constructivism where the focus is on using the technology to enhance student-centred learning and to create more personalised learning experiences (Elkind, 2014; Gu et al., 2020; Tan & Ng, 2021).

Despite constructivism being a crucial element in the English language curriculum it is noted that teachers in Malaysia still generally lacks the understanding and knowledge to related classroom practices based on the curriculum and unable to relate the curriculum and its practices effectively (Chun & Abdullah, 2019; UNESCO, 2013; Kassim & Hashim, 2023). Thus, this study is significant in investigating teachers'

understanding and classroom practices in implementing the CEFR-aligned KSSM English language curriculum, which emphasises the action-oriented approach that stems from constructivism as its roots to cultivate students' communicative proficiency (Piccardo & North, 2019).

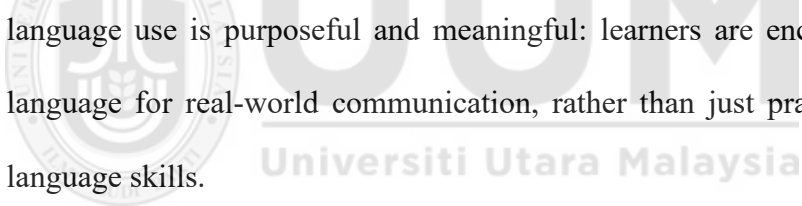
2.4.2 The Action-oriented Approach

The Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) emphasises on Action-oriented approach to language learning, which focuses on the learners' ability to use the language in real-life situations in line with the fundamentals of Vygotsky's (1978) constructivism. Simultaneously, learner-centredness is an approach that places priority on the learners' interest, needs, and goals in the educational process. The Action-oriented approach and learner-centredness are closely related as both approaches prioritise the learners' active participation and engagement in the learning process as stated in constructivism (Ahmad et al., 2019; Council of Europe, 2017; Hahl, 2022; Savski, 2021). The Action-oriented approach encourages learners to use the language for communication and meaningful interaction, which is consistent with a learner-centred approach that emphasises the learners' needs and interests which also stems from the beliefs of constructivism (Hahl, 2022; Savski, 2021).

The Action-oriented approach emphasises on the importance of communicative language use in the language learning process (North, 2022). The focus of action-oriented approach is the use of the target language for communicative tasks and real-life purposes as in the theory of Constructivism by Vygotsky (1978), rather than just learning linguistic forms and grammar (Piccardo & North, 2019). Its goal is to aid learners in the development of communicative competence, where the focus is the

effective use of the language when given real life situations (North et al., 2022). This approach aligns well with the constructivist approach, as it encourages learners to use language in meaningful contexts and to construct their own understanding of the language through interaction.

In the Malaysian context, the KSSM curriculum has been developed to align with the CEFR. One of the key features of the KSSM curriculum is its action-oriented approach to language learning (Nawawi et al., 2021). This approach emphasises the practical use of language in real-world situations and focuses on nurturing learners' ability to communicate appropriately and effectively (Zaki & Darmi, 2021). The action-oriented approach in the KSSM curriculum is based on the three main principles:

- 
- a) language use is purposeful and meaningful: learners are encouraged to use language for real-world communication, rather than just practising isolated language skills.
 - b) language use is task-based: learners are given tasks or activities which require them to use language in a practical way.
 - c) language use is learner-centred: learners are given opportunities to take ownership of their language learning and to reflect on their own learning process.

(Council of Europe, 2020)

By incorporating these principles into the KSSM curriculum, the aim is to provide learners with the skills and confidence they need to use language effectively in a range of real-world contexts. The curriculum also includes detailed descriptors of the skills

and competencies required at each level, which are aligned with the CEFR. Overall, the action-oriented approach in the KSSM curriculum is designed to offer a more practical and engaging exposure for learners, and to help them develop the language skills they need to communicate proficiently in diverse settings.

2.4.2.1 Teachers' Role in Action-oriented Approach

Teachers play crucial roles in curriculum implementation (Handelzalts, 2019; Pak et al., 2020). As such, in the action-oriented approach, teachers' role is important in facilitating learners' learning process (Council of Europe, 2020; Vargas et al., 2023). They guide and support students in using the language in an authentic and meaningful manner. The following are some key roles that teachers play in the action-oriented approach as outlined by the Council of Europe (2011):

- a) **Facilitating communication:** Teachers help students to communicate in the target language by creating a classroom environment that encourages interaction and collaboration (Council of Europe, 2011). They also create avenues for students to practice the target language via various contexts, such as role-plays, discussions, debates and projects (Fischer, 2020).
- b) **Providing feedback:** Teachers provide feedback on students' language use, helping them to find weakness and strengths, as well as providing guidance on how they can improve (Council of Europe, 2020). They also provide corrective feedback on errors in the language, while at the same time focussing on the meaning and message conveyed (Piccardo, 2019; Acar, 2019).
- c) **Designing tasks and activities:** Teachers design tasks and activities that are applicable to the students' interests and needs, and that provide opportunities

for authentic language use (Council of Europe, 2020). These tasks and activities may include real-life situations, such as ordering food in a restaurant or making travel arrangements (Supunya, 2022; Acar, 2019).

- d) **Fostering learner autonomy:** Teachers encourage students to take ownership of their own learning, by offering chances for self-reflection, goal-setting and self-assessment (Council of Europe, 2020). They also provide guidance on how to access resources outside the classroom, such as online materials or language learning apps (Piccardo, 2020; Fischer, 2020).
- e) **Assessing progress:** Teachers assess students' progress in language learning using a variety of methods and tools (Piccardo & North, 2019; Ahmet, 2020). For example, portfolios, self-assessment, peer-assessment and standardised tests. They also use assessment to provide feedback and support for students' ongoing development (North, 2021; Nagai et al., 2020).

In brief, in the action-oriented approach, the educator's role is extremely distinctive, as mentioned previously, in assisting learners to cultivate their capacity to employ the language in authentic circumstances, and to develop into proficient communicators in the target language (Council of Europe, 2020). Teachers' understanding of their roles in implementing the curriculum using the action-oriented approach is important in order to ensure the smooth implementation of the curriculum (Delibas & Gunday, 2016). However, studies have shown that teachers in Malaysia who are implementing the curriculum lack the understanding of the curriculum despite having attended the training in a cascade mode (Kok et al., 2019; Nawai & Sain, 2020; Uri & Aziz, 2019; Ong & Tajuddin, 2021; Marzaini et al., 2023; Yusof & Sulaiman, 2024). This study will look into the practice of key roles stated above in classroom practices of the teachers. It is also essential to examine the cascade training attended by the teachers

to comprehend the goals of these courses and how they can aid teachers in comprehending the CEFR-aligned KSSM English language curriculum.

2.5 Teacher Training

Professional development or in-service training programmes are one of the important elements that can materialise the process of curriculum implementation. When a curriculum is implemented, training provided to teachers as a form of support that enables the teachers to understand the purpose of the implementation and work towards it (Moore et al., 2023; Mizell, 2010). Besides, professional development programmes are the avenues where a teacher can resolve problems and issues of unfamiliarity in regard to curriculum implementation. According to Hiew and Murray (2018) and Ariffin et al. (2024), professional development courses are also an avenue where opportunity to gain new knowledge are provided to teachers for them to effectively practise the curriculum to achieve the goal of curriculum implementation.

To train teachers for curriculum implementation, one crucial factor that requires consideration is making teachers feel that the training is relevant to their practices. Therefore, the content of the programme needs to be prepared in a way that makes teachers feel relevant (Mwangi & Mugambi, 2013; Byrd & Alexander, 2020). If the content of the programme is unable to capture teachers' attention, most likely it will not be a success and the curriculum implementation may not take place as desired. Therefore, the professional development courses need to be designed in a way that it addresses the issues that are being faced by teachers as implementers of the curriculum so that they would feel connected to the training session. Most of the time the implementation of a curriculum often does not go on track because of sloppily carried

out professional development programmes or training sessions (Faez et al., 2011; Leong & Rethinasamy, 2023; Sadeghi & Richards, 2021). In most cases, due to lack of proper training related to implementing curriculum, teachers lack the understanding of the curriculum (Uri & Aziz, 2018; Leong & Rethinasamy, 2023; Ong & Tajuddin, 2021). This further leads to their ineffectiveness to carry out the curriculum effectively.

In this study, teachers' understanding of the curriculum and their classroom practices are being explored. Teachers' understanding of the curriculum was gained through the cascade training that was provided to teachers to disseminate the knowledge on how to go about the curriculum. Therefore, this study would look at the aspect of curriculum understanding among teachers based on the cascade training that was conducted. To comprehend the depth of teachers' understanding, how the cascade training was carried out in implementing the CEFR-aligned KSSM curriculum for secondary schools needs to be explored.

2.5.1 Types of Training Models

Teacher training and professional development courses are essential for the continuous progression and improvement of teaching practices, which in turn positively impact students' learning outcomes (Ariffin et al., 2024; Rusilowati & Wahyudi, 2020; Harris & Sass, 2011). These courses range from subject-specific training to pedagogical skill enhancement, allowing teachers to stay updated with current educational methodologies. Additionally, ongoing professional development ensures that educators are equipped to meet diverse classroom needs, fostering a more inclusive and effective learning environment. There are a number of training models that have been developed to train in service teachers.

2.5.1.1 Workshops and Seminars

One of the most traditional forms of professional training for teachers are workshops and seminars. Workshops and seminars are often done for a small group of teachers handled by experts or experienced educators on specific skills or teaching strategies (Sey, 2023; Sadhegi & Richards, 2021). Workshops and seminars are often done as a one-off training and provide teachers with new opportunities to learn but it lacks follow-up support for implementation (Enesi et al., 2021; Tran & Nguyen, 2021).

2.5.1.2 Coaching and Mentoring

In coaching and mentoring model, coaches or trained educators with certain skills or expertise work closely with a small group of teachers or to a one-to-one interaction (Sabilah et al., 2021; Tasdemir & Karaman, 2022). The purpose of coaching or mentoring is to provide personalised guidance and plenty of support to help teachers to improve their instructional practices. This method can be highly effective as it provides ongoing support and training and caters to a teacher's specific professional need (Tasdemir & Karaman, 2022). However, this method of training is not feasible to train a large group of teachers. Especially the English language teachers in Malaysia who needs training on the new curriculum and they are large in numbers (Ministry of Education, Malaysia, 2015)

2.5.1.3 Professional Learning Communities (PLCs)

Professional learning communities (PLCs) is a collaborative effort of groups of teachers who meet regularly to explore, review or reflect on their teaching practices and the underlying issues within the teaching and learning realm (Cheng & Pan, 2019; Slack, 2019). During PLCs, teachers share ideas, analyse data on evaluation and find

a collaborative solution over similar issues they are facing (Cano, 2022). PLCs promote a positive collaborative culture among teachers and help to continue to improve in their classroom practices (Cheng & Pan, 2019). Effective PLCs are often long-term focussed and help in productivity in teaching practices (Cano, 2022).

2.5.1.4 Online and Blended Learning Courses

Online and blended learning training models uses technology to provide teachers opportunities for professional developments (Mumford & Dikilitaş, 2020). Through online and blended learning models, teachers are given access to various forms of webinars, learning communities and online courses to develop their skills and knowledge in the field of teaching and learning (Hashemi & Sina, 2020). These models give easy access to teachers to participate in courses related to their field in any parts of the world (Othman, 2022). Besides, these models also help educators who are busy to learn and navigate the course at their own pace without having to travel far and wide.

2.5.2 The Cascade Training Model

To disseminate knowledge among teachers at a large scale, the cascade training model is said to be one of the most effective ways (Moulakdi & Bouchamma, 2020 & Karalis, 2016). The word "cascade" refers to an approach of training individuals in a large group who will then go on to train another group of individuals, and so on, like a cascading effect. The initial training is usually conducted by experts or trainers who have the essential skills and knowledge to train others. The cascade training aims to disseminate knowledge and skills to a large group of people in an efficient and cost-effective manner. Within the realm of language instruction, cascade training is often a

method to train teachers on implementing curriculum frameworks that are being introduced into the system, such as the CEFR-aligned English language curriculum for secondary schools, so that they can then train other teachers in their schools or regions. In terms of the cascade training for implementing the CEFR-aligned KSSM English language curriculum, it is explained in the English language Education RoadMap (2015 – 2025, p.398):

“A training model which involves the transmission of information from a small initial group to successively larger groups. A small group known as Master Trainers are first trained, and then sent out to train their own groups. The second groups of trainees become trainers and train their own groups, and so on. Cascading is the most efficient means of training a large number of people.”

In the cascade training approach, each iteration of the training is referred to as a level or tier (Hayes, 2000; Karalis 2016). The training is often done in a top-down approach as stated above. It is believed that the cascade training has a strong capacity to expand information effectively to participants if done using the fundamental principles (Hayes, 2000). Hayes (2000) has set a list of criteria that need to be presented in professional development courses that are done in cascade form in order to ensure the training to be successful. The criteria are :

- a) Instead of using a transmissive approach, the training must be experiential and introspective.
- b) The instruction must be flexible in its application; Strict adherence to established methods of operation should not be anticipated.
- c) knowledge must be distributed as broadly as feasible across the system and not be centralised at the top.
- d) The creation of materials for training must be with the involvement of a variety of stakeholders.
- e) In the cascade structure, it is preferable to decentralise responsibilities.

A substantial group of 60,000 English language teachers were involved in the cascade training for the English language curriculum implementation in Malaysia (Ministry of Education Malaysia, 2015). Disseminating knowledge about curriculum implementation to such many teachers within a limited timeframe is undoubtedly challenging. Therefore, the training sessions were broken down into several phases.

Despite, the training being done in a cascade model, it is crucial to find out the expanse of understanding among teachers in relation to the implementation of curriculum. This is important since the individuals responsible for implementing the curriculum, the teachers must possess a thorough understanding of it. This knowledge enables them to effectively deliver the curriculum in the classroom via appropriate teaching and learning practices. Therefore, it is vital to examine the extent of teachers' understanding concerning the curriculum and the way it is presented in their teaching and learning practices in their classrooms through the training that they have received.

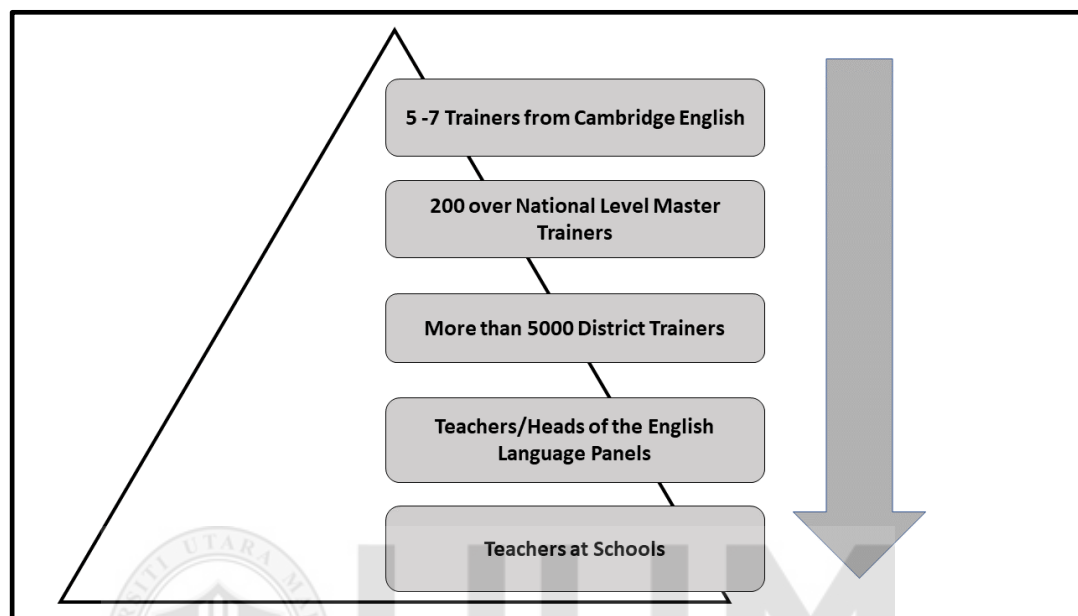
2.5.3 The Cascade Training for Curriculum Implementation

Before the CEFR-aligned KSSM Curriculum was implemented, English language teachers in Malaysia was required to attend a nationwide cascade training. This was done for them to understand the curriculum and its implementation process (Ministry of Education, Malaysia, 2015). The training was done via cascading approach, where the national level Master trainers provided training to state-level trainers, who then delivered the training to district-level trainers, who finally trained the head of the panels from schools at the district level training (Lee et al., 2022; Ong & Tajuddin, 2021; Aziz et al., 2018). This approach allows for a consistent and standardised

delivery of training across the country. Figure 6 shows the cascade training dissemination process.

Figure 6

Cascade Training Dissemination Process (Ong & Tajuddin, 2021)



The cascade training covered various aspects of curriculum implementation, such as familiarisation of CEFR framework, curriculum planning, lesson planning, assessment and evaluation (Ministry of Education, Malaysia, 2015). It also emphasised on the importance of the 21st-century skills, such as problem-solving, critical thinking, collaboration, and communication, in preparing students for the future challenges (Ministry of Education, 2015). Figure 7 shows the cascade trainings that were carried out since 2016.

Figure 7

Cascade Training for CEFR-aligned Curriculum Implementation

Cascade Trainings	Year	National Master Trainers
CEFR Familiarisation	2016	271
Learning Material Adaptation	2017	192
Curriculum Induction Form 1 – Form 5	2017 – 2019	344
Formative Assessment	2018	149

NOTE: Retrieved from ‘English Language Education Reform in Malaysia: The Roadmap 2015 – 2025.’

The cascade training was an initiative by the Ministry of Education to ensure that the curriculum implementation of the CEFR-aligned English language curriculum is in line with the national aspirations towards improving English language proficiency among Malaysians.

2.5.3.1 CEFR Familiarisation Training

The CEFR familiarisation training was the first cascade training that was conducted in Malaysia before the implementation of the CEFR-aligned English language Curriculum in 2016. The objective of the cascade training was to introduce to teachers the CEFR framework and make them familiar with the concept of CEFR (Cambridge English Language Assessment, 2016). Through the training, teachers were introduced to the CEFR global scale and the way a speaker’s proficiency is measured through the different descriptors provided in the framework (Cambridge English Language Assessment, 2016). The training also focussed on language learning strategies as well as teaching language progressively focusing on all the four skills.

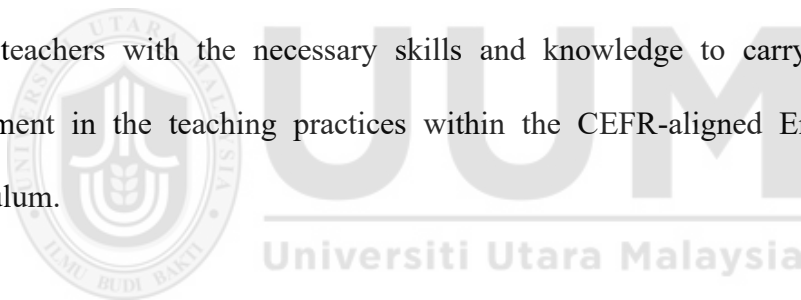
2.5.3.2 Learning Materials Evaluation, Adaptation and Design

The cascade training on learning materials adaptation focused on evaluation of language learning materials in the CEFR standards and teachers learn to adapt materials according to the different CEFR levels (Cambridge English language assessment, 2017). The course also aimed to make teachers understand that they can adapt and design materials in line with their students' proficiency for teaching and learning from various sources (Cambridge English language assessment, 2017). One key aspect of the training was understanding teaching and learning materials at different CEFR levels (A1-C2) in terms of reading, writing, listening and speaking. The understanding is important as it helps teachers to decide whether or not the materials, they use are suitable for the competency levels of their students (Cambridge English language assessment, 2017). Through the training, participants learned to analyse the appropriate language levels for the materials to be used in the classroom, in terms of language, vocabulary, structure and level of difficulty. Besides evaluating materials, teachers were also trained to adapt materials from various CEFR-aligned sources (Cambridge English language assessment, 2017). Participants were trained to develop and adapt supplementary materials where they create additional resources like visual aids, multimedia, and exercises that are suitable for different CEFR levels.

2.5.3.3 Formative Assessment: Principles and Practices

The cascade training on formative assessment principles and practices was aimed at developing understanding and application of formative assessments in language teaching in the implementation of the CEFR-aligned English language curriculum (Cambridge English language assessment, 2018).

Teachers are introduced to the underpinning concepts of formative assessment and its role in students' engagement in language learning. It also equips teachers with the tools needed to integrate formative assessments in their teaching practices effectively. Another aspect of the training is to make teachers understand how formative assessment strategies are interwoven with the CEFR framework and the curriculum that is aligned with it. Another key focus of the training was to apply the formative assessment techniques in the lesson plans to be aligned with the lesson objectives. Teachers were also trained to develop strategies to provide effective feedback to students' learning via formative assessments. A myriad of tools is explored to enable teachers to understand the importance of giving feedback in language learning. All in all, the formative assessment principles and practices cascade training was designed to equip teachers with the necessary skills and knowledge to carry out formative assessment in the teaching practices within the CEFR-aligned English language curriculum.



2.5.3.4 Curriculum Induction Training for Secondary Schools 2017 – 2019

The curriculum Induction training for teachers was conducted with the aim to develop comprehensive understanding and practical skills which are important for curriculum implementation among teachers. The objectives of the training were multifaceted, and it sought to enable teachers to find connections between the curriculum reform, its implementation and classroom practices (Cambridge English Language Assessment, 2017). Besides, the training also emphasised on the effective use of curriculum documents for lesson planning ensuring teachers are aligning their teaching with the learning standards outlined in curriculum documents such as the Scheme of Work (SOW), Standard Based English Language Curriculum Document (SBELC) and the

textbook (Cambridge English Language Assessment, 2017). An important focus was also placed on developing learning objectives based on the curriculum documents to ensure the lessons are aligned with the curriculum. In the training, teachers were given the opportunity to practice the teaching activities they designed at the training to enhance their teaching practice (Cambridge English Language Assessment, 2017). This training was instrumental to prepare the teachers to implement the CEFR-aligned KSSM English language curriculum.

2.5.4 The Objectives of the Cascade Training for Curriculum Implementation

The goals of the CEFR cascade training for curriculum implementation in Malaysia aim to enhance the standard of language education within the nation by equipping teachers with the essential knowledge, resources, and skills. It is as such, so that teachers will be able to effectively implement the CEFR-aligned KSSM English language curriculum (Don et al., 2015). The specific objectives of the CEFR cascade training are to:

- a) provide an understanding of the CEFR framework and its application in classroom practices.
- b) develop the necessary language teaching competencies among teachers, including lesson planning, assessment, and evaluation.
- c) promote learner-centredness and communicative approaches in language teaching.
- d) encourage progression in terms of language proficiency among students, including the development of the four language skills (speaking, writing, reading, and listening) as well as the use of language in real-life situations.

(Don et al., 2015; Uri & Aziz, 2018; Aziz et al., 2018)

Overall, the aim of the CEFR cascade training is to ameliorate the quality and effectiveness of the role of teachers as the implementers of the English language education in the country. It is as such, so that teachers' understanding of the curriculum and their classroom practices are aligned with the objectives set forth in the English Language Education Roadmap (2013 – 2025). This is to achieve the ultimate goal of producing competent and confident language users who are able to communicate effectively in the global community.

There are several studies that was carried out to assess the efficacy of the cascade training for Malaysian English language teachers (Aziz et al., 2018; Alih et al., 2020; Ong & Tajuddin, 2021). Despite the continuous professional development courses, teachers' understanding of the curriculum and their classroom practices remained to be limitedly explored (Sidhu et al., 2018). Therefore, this study wishes to look more in-depth into teachers' understanding of the curriculum and their classroom implementation of the CEFR-aligned KSSM English language curriculum based on the training that they had attended.

2.5.5 Issues in the Cascade Training

The cascade training for the implementation of the CEFR-aligned English language curriculum in Malaysia encountered several notable challenges. The challenges can potentially impede its effectiveness. Addressing these challenges is crucial to identify how teachers understanding of the curriculum could have been impacted the training sessions.

Cascade training is characterised by multiple hierarchical levels of knowledge dissemination. This entails a process wherein information is sequentially transferred from master trainers to intermediate trainers and then to teachers (Ong, 2022). In the context of cascade training for the Malaysia's CEFR-aligned English language curriculum, this structure has caused a significant loss of information and misinterpretation at each successive stage, leading to dilution of core understanding among teachers and when it reached the lowest level the dilution has become worsened (Uri, 2021; Alih et al., 2021; Nii & Yunus, 2022).

A notable challenge in cascade training lies in the variability of trainers' experience and expertise, resulting in inconsistent training quality across sessions. In Malaysia, the cascade training have led to variability in the interpretation and delivery of CEFR-aligned practices (Leong & Rethinasamy, 2023; Uri, 2021; Hishamuddin et al., 2021). Besides, the time spent on the cascade training was also very limited, where in four days training, so much was covered and it was done in a complete rush which affects teachers' comprehensibility of the curriculum (Yusoff et al., 2022; Marziani et al., 2023). These inconsistencies have adversely impacted teachers' understanding and the implementation of the curriculum in their classrooms (Leong & Rethinasamy, 2023; Uri, 2021; Hishamuddin et al., 2021).

The lack in the cascade training have led to many inconsistencies. Especially, at the implementation levels, when teachers apply the curriculum into their teaching practices (Aziz et al., 2018; Uri & Aziz, 2018; Uri, 2023; Marzaini, 2023). Through this study, the extent of teachers understanding of the curriculum in terms of classroom practices of the curriculum can be determined.

2.6 Curriculum Implementation

Curriculum implementation refers to the act of executing a pre-designed curriculum and bringing it to life in the classroom. This involves translating the curriculum documents, including goals, objectives, content, and assessment methods, into actual teaching and learning activities in the classroom (Almadani et al., 2023; Chaudary, 2015; Hunkins & Ornstein, 2018). Curriculum implementation involves several steps or stages (Hord & Huling, 1986; Virgilio, 1984; Hunkins, 1980).

The first one being teacher training and professional development (Hord & Huling, 1986; Virgilio, 1984; Hunkins, 1980). Teachers need to be prepared to implement the curriculum effectively. This may involve training on new instructional methods, assessment techniques or content areas (Coskun & Aslan, 2021; Hord & Huling, 1986; Virgilio, 1984; Hunkins, 1980). It is followed by classroom planning, where teachers plan their lessons and activities based on the curriculum documents and ensure the lessons are carried out to achieve the overall intended objective of the curriculum (Almadani et al., 2023; Hunkins, 1980; Hord & Huling, 1986; Virgilio, 1984). Keeping this in mind, teachers need to decide what to teach, how to teach and how to assess what they teach (Coskun & Aslan, 2021; Hunkins, 1980; Hord & Huling, 1986; Virgilio, 1984). This is then followed by the observation of progress of the curriculum implementation and making the necessary changes or alteration needed through feedback from students and stakeholders (Tamang, 2023; Coskun & Aslan, 2021; Hunkins, 1980; Hord & Huling, 1986; Virgilio, 1984).

In summary, the implementation of a curriculum in the context of language education is a dynamic and intricate process. It requires the involvement of numerous individuals

and activities. Proper implementation of a planned curriculum plays a crucial role in actualising and ensuring its success.

2.6.1 Curriculum Implementation Models

Curriculum implementation models are structures used to put curriculum into practice in educational curriculum. The curriculum implementation models are designed to provide procedures and guidelines that would support in delivering effective learning outcomes (Hunkins & Ornstein, 2018). Different curriculum models focus on the different aspects of the curriculum implementation process such as evaluation, teacher training and student engagement. The different curriculum models may particularly focus on the different aspects of the curriculum in terms of learners' need the environment of the curriculum as well being implemented.

2.6.1.1 Overcoming Resistant to Change Model (ORC)

The Overcoming Resistance to Change Model (ORC) investigates the barriers that can be identified in curriculum changes (Arcaro, 2024; Hunkins & Ornstein, 2018). It also lays out the strategies to address them (Arcaro, 2024; Hunkins & Ornstein, 2018). This model identifies the resistance from stakeholders, teachers and students which are of utmost important group to navigate the challenges in implementing the curriculum (Arcaro, 2024; Hunkins & Ornstein, 2018).

2.6.1.2 Leadership Obstacle Course (LOC)

The focus of this model is the role of leaders in leading curriculum changes and its implementation (Ornstein & Hunkins, 2018; Mbothu, 2015). The LOC also emphasises on the importance of vision, leadership skills and the ability of the school

leaders to manage. This enables the effective implementation of the curriculum (Kabombwe et al., 2020).

2.6.1.3 The Linkage Model

The Linkage Model is a framework that is used in curriculum implementation to understand how the curriculum policies and the curriculum materials are put into practices (Chen et al., 2023; Havelock, 1973). This model stresses on the importance of bringing together different components in the education to ensure the curriculum implementation is effective (Baska & Wood, 2023; Havelock, 1973). Among the components that the model stresses are curriculum design and materials, teacher training and professional development, assessment and evaluation, classroom instruction, support system, and policy alignment (Baska & Woods, 2023; Ornstein & Hunkins, 2018).

2.6.1.4 Tyler's Curriculum Development Model

Tyler's Model is a distinguished curriculum development model developed by Ralph Tyler in the 1940s. It is a systematic approach in curriculum design where emphasis is given on the achievement of educational objectives (Fauzobihi et al., 2022; Bhuttah et al., 2019;). The Tyler's Model focuses on the four most important elements curriculum implementation which are objective, content, learning experiences, and evaluation (Joseph, 2021). Though the model is prominent in shaping curriculum development, it is also urged that its principles are critically used in curriculum implementation as the design of this model is responsive to the needs of pupils and educational environment (Lunenburg, 2011; Fauzobihi et al., 2022).

2.6.1.5 Oliva's Curriculum Development Model

The Oliva's Model is an approach that focusses on several key aspects to ensure effective learning outcomes aligned with the curriculum. It involves the practicality in the organisation and implementation of the curriculum. The focus is on alignment of the content, methods and materials along with the curriculum goals and objectives.

The central element of this model is the specification of clear instructional goals and objectives, taken from the broader curriculum goals. Setting objectives in a lesson is crucial as it will enable teachers to find directions in their teaching and learning processes which would further ensure measurable outcomes (Gordon et al., 2019; Almadani et al., 2023; Oliva, 2009). This model also emphasises on effective instructional strategies that would enable students' engagement throughout the learning process (Oliva, 2009). Finally, the process of evaluation in learning is seen as ongoing and integral part of classroom practices in curriculum implementation (Gordon et al., 2019; Almadi et al., 2023). This includes continuous assessment on and for learning and making changes or improvise where appropriate (Gordon et al., 2019; Supriani et al., 2022). Overall, this model advocates for an accommodative approach to curriculum implementation where it emphasises on organisation, strategic teaching method, clarity and continual improvement (Gordon et al., 2019; Supriani et al., 2022).

2.6.2 Curriculum Implementation Models in Line with the CEFR-aligned Curriculum

Curriculum implementation models are structured approaches that guide the development and execution of educational curricula. This study refers to two key

models, which are Tyler's Model (1949) and Oliva's Model (2009). These models provide foundational frameworks for curriculum implementation processes.

Tyler's Model developed by Ralph Tyler in 1949, emphasises four key elements of curriculum design which are objective, content, learning experiences, and evaluation. It is a linear model that involves in setting clear objectives, determining appropriate content, creating effective learning experiences while evaluating pupils learning progress. Tyler's curriculum model was used globally for curriculum development and implementation (Ibeh, 2022; Bhuttah et al., 2019; Kelly, 2004; Parkay & Has, 2000; Reis, 1999). Similar to Tyler's Model, the Oliva's Model focuses on instructional goals and objectives, instructional strategies, learning needs and ongoing process of evaluation (Almadani et al., 2023; Supriani et al., 2022; Gordon et al., 2019).

The CEFR-aligned KSSM English language curriculum can be related to several curriculum implementation models, but the most relevant ones would be Tyler's model and Oliva's Model. Both the models emphasise on the importance of clear objectives, appropriate content, effective learning experiences, and evaluation (Almadani et al., 2023; Gordon et al., 2019; Tyler, 2013; Lunenberg, 2011). These are all important elements of the CEFR-aligned curriculum (Council of Europe, 2020). Here's how each element can be related to the implementation of the CEFR-aligned KSSM English language curriculum;

- (a) **Objectives:** Implementation of a curriculum begins with the setting of a clear objective as envisaged by the Tyler's model (Muljani & Lutfiana, 2020) and Oliva's Model (Oliva, 2009). Similarly, the CEFR-aligned KSSM English language curriculum has provided a set of clear language learning objectives

that are organised into levels of proficiency ranging from A1 till C2 (Council of Europe, 2020). These objectives are based on language proficiency that learners are expected to achieve at each level (Council of Europe, 2020). Teachers need to be familiar with these objectives to design appropriate learning experiences that help students achieve them (Nagai et al., 2020).

(b) **Content:** The content element in the Tyler's model (1984) focusses on the selection and the organisation of the content of the lesson that need to be taught in line with the objective that is decided (Tyler, 2013; Bhuttah et al., 2019). Whereas the Oliva's model (2009) in terms of contents dives deeper into the selection and organisation of content aligned with the curriculum, taking into account the scope and sequence of the material for learning (Almadani et al., 2023). Likewise, the content of the CEFR-aligned KSSM English language curriculum is designed to support the development of language proficiency at each level (Ministry of Education, Malaysia, 2020). This includes the focus on language skills (listening, speaking, writing, and reading). The content is also relevant to pupils' need and aligned with the CEFR descriptors for each level.

(c) **Learning experiences:** Both Tyler's model (1984) and Oliva's Model (2009) put the emphasis on learning experiences that support learners in their learning. This should be done by teachers by providing rich learning experience which is both engaging and meaningful and aligned with the content and objectives, (Ashari et al., 2023; Tyler, 1984; Oliva, 2009). In similar respect, The CEFR emphasises communicative competence to language teaching which involves creating learning experiences that enable students to use the language in a

meaningful way (Nagai et al., 2020). This may involve pair and group work or project-based learning or other activities that may encourage interaction and collaboration (Ministry of Education, Malaysia, 2020). Teachers need to design the learning experiences that are in line with the objectives and contents as well as engaging which will provide pupils opportunities to practice and develop their language proficiency (Ministry of Education, Malaysia, 2020).

(d) **Evaluation:** Both Tyler (1984) and Oliva (2009) believe that evaluation is an important part in curriculum implementation where teachers are expected to use various tools and methods to assess the progress of the pupils through continuous assessment and feedback (Tyler, 2013; Oliva, 2009). In parallel, evaluation is a critical component of a CEFR-aligned KSSM English language curriculum (Ministry of Education, Malaysia, 2020). Teachers' need to assess students' language proficiency through summative and formative assessments to determine their progress and identify areas that need further attention (Council of Europe, 2020). This involves using a variety of assessment tools, such as tests, quizzes, portfolios, and performance-based assessments, and aligning them with the CEFR descriptors for each level. Evaluation also provides feedback to students, which can help them improving their language skills.

As seen above, Tyler's model (1984) and Oliva's Model (2009) are in tandem with the CEFR-aligned KSSM English language curriculum for the Malaysian secondary schools. The elements in Tyler's model (1984) and Oliva's Model (2009) would help to study teachers' understanding of curriculum implementation in the aspect of

classroom practices of the CEFR-aligned KSSM English language curriculum. It would also be able to see whether the educational goals are accomplished according to the curriculum requirements.

As this study is focusing on teachers' understanding of the curriculum and their classroom practices, it can be understood if teachers understanding, and the practices are relevant to the curriculum based on the four key elements that has been explained. The objectives of the cascade training for the implementation of the CEFR-aligned KSSM English Language curriculum are also in tandem with the four key elements discussed based on Tyler's Model and Oliva's Model. In terms of theoretical aspects, Tyler's model (1984) and Oliva's Model (2009) are more focussed on designing a structured and organised curriculum. While, constructivism emphasises on the importance of learner-centred and experiential learning (Tyler, 2013; Oliva, 2009).

However, there are connections among the approaches. For example, both Tyler's curriculum model (1984) and Oliva's curriculum model (2009) along with constructivism emphasise the importance of setting clear objectives for learning. Constructivism also emphasises the importance of adapting teaching methods to the interests and needs of learners. This is similar to Tyler's and Oliva's emphasis on selecting appropriate methods for achieving specific learning objectives.

2.7 Empirical Studies on Curriculum Implementation

Curriculum implementation plays a crucial role in education as it impacts the effectiveness of the curriculum in achieving its intended goals. However, studies have indicated that there is frequently a discrepancy between the intended curriculum and

its practical implementation in the classroom setting. This disparity has been noticed in several countries worldwide, including those where English is learned as a second or foreign language. The existing literature suggests that this discrepancy may be due to teachers' lack of understanding of the curriculum and their classroom practices. For instance, Wang (2008) found inconsistencies between the intended curriculum and teachers' practices in implementing the language curriculum in China. Similarly, Orafi and Borg (2009) identified a discrepancy between the instruction provided in Libyan secondary schools and the objectives of the curriculum. Additionally, Wang (2010) found that the understanding of the administrators in regard to English language curriculum was not in tandem with policymakers' intentions, which affected its implementation. These findings collectively underscore the systemic disconnect between curriculum design and implementation, highlighting the need for better alignment among policymakers, administrators, and educators to bridge the gap between curriculum intentions and classroom realities.

A study by Turnbull (2011) found that teachers were not adequately prepared, and it took a significant amount of time for them to implement the curriculum effectively when a curriculum with the fundamentals of Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR) was introduced in Canada. Similarly, Ngo (2017) investigated Vietnamese teachers' understanding and implementation of the CEFR-aligned curriculum and found that despite their positive attitude towards the curriculum, they did not have a comprehensive grasp of the curriculum, which hindered its implementation. These studies highlight a common challenge in curriculum implementations post curriculum reforms which highlights the critical need for comprehensive training and support to ensure effective and timely implementation of curriculum changes.

Narrative inquiries by Anwar (2020) and Nuraini (2020) focussed on investigating the hindrances encountered by stakeholders in implementing curriculum policies. Anwar's study explored the hurdles went through by English teachers in the implementation process of a curriculum in senior high schools, while Nuraini's study focused on the teachers' comprehension as well as challenges faced by English teachers, and students when there was a change in curriculum. Both studies highlighted the top-down approach to curriculum change, where stakeholders had little input or control over the change process. The lack of involvement and voice in the implementation process resulted in challenges such as limited resources, time constraints, and teacher paperwork. These findings are similar to studies on the implementation of the CEFR-aligned curriculum in Malaysia, where it has been reported lack of support and understanding of the curriculum framework among teachers, and challenges in the implementation part of the curriculum in their classroom practices. Therefore, there is a need for a deeper exploration of teachers' understanding and curriculum implementation through a narrative inquiry process so that, teachers understanding and how they process their understanding through classroom practices can be explored deeper.

The existing literature highlights the importance of investigating teachers' understanding of the curriculum and their classroom practices to ensure successful curriculum implementation. This is particularly significant in countries where English is taught as a foreign or second language. In such contexts, curriculum implementation may be swayed towards drill-based methods rather than adhering to the intended curriculum.

Findings from studies done by the Malaysian School Inspectorates (Ministry of Education, 2010d) as well as other researchers on classroom practices in Malaysia had revealed that although the previous curriculum implementations have emphasised on learner-centred practices in classroom teaching and learning activities, most teachers were more engaged in examination drilling and chalk and talk methods without active participations from students (Mohammad et al., 2022; Bakar et al., 2020; Philip et al., 2019; Aman & Mustafa, 2006; Mustafa et al., 2006; Sidhu et al., 2010; Abdul Rahman, 1987). Before the implementation of the CEFR-aligned KSSM curriculum for secondary schools, the baseline study conducted by the Malaysian school inspectorates revealed that quality teaching is lacking in most classroom (National Education Blueprint 2013 –2025), which is an evident that the curriculum implementation did not reach the aspiring target due to lack of understanding among teachers.

The similarities found in all the studies above indicate that the implementation of the curriculum is affected by teachers' inadequate understanding of the curriculum. This lack of understanding is caused by insufficient training and exposure provided to the teachers. Consequently, these factors have led to classroom practices that are not aligned with the curriculum objectives.

2.8 Studies on CEFR-aligned KSSM English Curriculum Implementation in Malaysia

Despite a number of studies being conducted on the implementation of the CEFR-aligned English language curriculum for secondary schools in Malaysia, the literature suggests that understanding of the curriculum by teachers is still an area that requires

further exploration. Some studies have reported that teachers generally have a positive perception towards the curriculum and an acceptable level of understanding of the CEFR framework (Kaur & Jian, 2022; Yin & Ahmad, 2021). However, other studies have shown that many teachers do not understand the framework and how to adjust the curriculum to their classroom practices (Aziz & Uri, 2017; Lee et al., 2021).

Moreover, several studies have highlighted the issues and hindrances faced by teachers in implementing the curriculum. For instance, teachers perceive the implementation of the CEFR-aligned curriculum as challenging and require more support and guidance in carrying out the practices (Kaur & Jian, 2022). Additionally, the cascade training for teachers has been described as "problematic" and in need of improvement to ensure teachers' full grasp of the implementation process (Aziz et al., 2018). It is also to be noted that the execution of the CEFR has been ineffective due to inadequate training, lack of materials, and inadequate teacher proficiency levels, which all contribute to teachers' inadequate understanding and implementation of the curriculum (Alih et al., 2021). These findings collectively underscore the pressing need for a more robust and coherent support system that addresses training quality, resource availability, and teacher competency, as these elements are intrinsically linked to the successful implementation of the CEFR-aligned curriculum.

Uri et al., (2023) investigated the challenges faced by the Malaysian English language teachers in understanding the CEFR-aligned English language curriculum. This mixed method study found that among the challenges faced by teachers in curriculum implementation are lack of understanding of the CEFR framework, being unsure about the implementation of the curriculum and not being able to differentiate the six levels

of descriptors when it comes to practices and provided conflicting information on training and classroom practices. The study also highlighted challenges in terms of preparing for the lessons, designing the lesson objectives as well as lesson materials. They were unable to match the lessons with the lesson objectives. The study suggested more focused training and support for teachers for better curriculum implementation. These findings reveal that the persistent challenges in understanding and applying the CEFR framework stem from systemic inadequacies in training and support, underscoring the need for a more cohesive approach that bridges the gap between theoretical understanding and practical classroom application.

Alih et al., (2020) focused on teachers' knowledge and beliefs in the implementation of CEFR-aligned English language curriculum in Malaysia. The study found that there is a shift in the implementation of the CEFR-aligned curriculum where teachers are moving from the traditional teacher-centred practices to student-centred, focusing on communicative activities moving from the exam-oriented teaching approaches. However, teacher-centredness and exam-oriented was still in practice although it was not a dominant practice. The study also found that the teachers have shown different levels of understanding of the curriculum. There were indication in the study that the training lacked adequateness and support for teachers, that teachers are unable to fully understand and implement the curriculum. The study suggested a further training programme for teachers so that they will be able to fully understand the curriculum. These findings highlight that while there is a gradual shift towards student-centred and communicative practices, the persistence of traditional methods and inconsistent understanding among teachers demonstrates the urgent need for comprehensive and

sustained training programmes to bridge the gap between policy intentions and classroom realities.

A study by Bayoung and Hashim (2023) on teachers' attitudes and slants towards the CEFR-aligned curriculum framework revealed that teachers mostly have the basic understanding of the CEFR framework. Despite that, they struggle with the knowledge and there was a conflict among the teachers on the ideas they received on communicative language learning, which is, they believe will hamper the development of skills other than the speaking skill in the language. This misunderstanding among teachers shows they lack the understanding of the curriculum, which have led them to have a conflict to continue with the existing old school practices. The study also suggested in-depth training and workshops for teachers to develop better understanding of the curriculum. These findings reveal that the superficial understanding of the CEFR framework, coupled with conflicting perceptions about communicative language learning, perpetuates outdated practices and highlights the necessity for in-depth, targeted training to align teachers' beliefs and practices with the curriculum's holistic objectives.

Kaur and Jian (2022) found that teachers had positively perceived that the implementation of the CEFR-aligned English language curriculum. Despite that, they had problem in terms of implementation. Difficulty in aligning lesson objectives with the curriculum standard, unable to match training ideas in classroom practices and unable to move from past practices are among some of the issues highlighted in this study. The shortcomings from the training and trainers are also cited as the reasons some teachers are unable to relate the curriculum in their practices. Due to the

challenges and issues teachers are unable to implement the curriculum successfully despite having positive views on the CEFR-aligned English language curriculum.

A study by Marzaini et al. (2023) on the implementation of teachers' professional development in the context of CEFR-aligned curriculum highlighted issues in the training carried out for teachers. The study highlighted issues such as in-house training at schools were not conducted as seriously as how the state level and district level training was conducted, rendering teachers at school with limited knowledge on curriculum implementation and classroom-based assessment. Another issue pointed out was lack of time in carrying out proper professional development for teachers at school level. Besides, it was also stated that trainers at district and state level training lacked experience and the training did not have post-training support. The trainers were unable to address important questions asked during the training. The study also stated that the training was too general and did not focus on specific classroom practices on dealing with differentiation and low proficiency learners. The challenges highlighted in the study indicated a more effective training approach for teachers for better curriculum implementation.

Study by Ong and Tajuddin (2021) on experiences of teachers on cascade training revealed that despite teachers showing welcoming gestures of the new curriculum, there were issues with the quality of the cascade training due to lack of resources which hampered teachers understanding of the curriculum which led to the teachers making their own interpretation of classroom practices. Some of their interpretations contradicted the communicative practices which led to teacher-centred and exam-oriented practices. Teachers also had difficulties in getting support post-cascade

training. The study also attributed the lack of quality in the cascade training was also due to lack of proper training plans, venue and resources.

In a study on perceptions of English teachers regarding the implementation of CEFR-aligned curriculum by Nii et al. (2022), teachers expressed concern on the move from teacher-centred to student-centred learning approach and had worried what would happen if students were not given examination practices. It shows their reluctance to let go the exam-centred practices. However, some teachers are seen to be slowly shifting to student-centred practices. The study also highlighted teachers' concern on the lack of teaching and learning materials, which led teachers to heavily rely on textbooks. Most teachers, despite having positive beliefs, did not attempt strategies to develop critical thinking and real-world relevance due to lack of understanding. The study also found that while some teachers have shown good understanding of the curriculum through their practices, some are still struggling to adapt the curriculum. Overall, the study highlighted that, although there are positive views on the CEFR-aligned curriculum, teachers need support for better understanding of the curriculum in terms of more training, support as well as resources.

Lee et al. (2022) in a study on teachers' perception on the CEFR Syllabus, found that some teachers holding strong to traditional teacher-centred practices despite having understood the CEFR-aligned curriculum. However, their reliance on teacher-centred practices is not too obvious as they are trying to change their style to student-centred practices. It was also found that teachers are too reliable on textbooks and textbook exercises due to lack of proper materials and resources. While some teachers in the study find that CEFR-aligned curriculum is effective, others feel that there is a need

for rote learning and are still doubtful of communicative and action-oriented approach to develop language skills. It was also found teachers relied on exam-based practices in the classroom rather than communicative practices suggested in the curriculum documents. The study finally stated that teachers involved in the study were in a state of confusion and need further training to have a good understanding of the curriculum and the concept of communicative competence. The teachers are holding hard on traditional practices due to lack of understanding of the CEFR-aligned curriculum, which they feel less effective.

Alih et al. (2021), in a study on the challenges faced by English language teachers in implementing the CEFR-aligned English language curriculum in Malaysia, revealed several issues. Teachers struggled with a lack of understanding in incorporating real-world relevance and creative and critical thinking, as well as low motivation due to curriculum changes and improper cascade training. Additional challenges included a lack of materials leading to over-reliance on textbook exercises, time constraints resulting in teacher-centred practices and insufficient preparation time, diverse student proficiency levels, and inadequate facilities for language lessons. Despite all the issues faced, some teachers have positive beliefs in the adoption of the CEFR-aligned curriculum. They are also shifting their teaching and learning practices away from exam and teacher-centred practices. The study also highlights the incorporation of local context in the curriculum which would be helpful in enhancing students' engagement and understanding. The findings of the study show that it is important for teachers to be given proper support to ensure effective implementation of a curriculum.

A study by Yusuff et al. (2022) to understand teachers' experiences in integrating CEFR into their teaching practices found that in general teachers are positive towards the CEFR-aligned curriculum. However, the issue that was found through the study was in adapting to unfamiliar cultural context that takes most of their time to prepare and understand. Teachers also stated that it was important for learners to be autonomous in learning to develop communicative competence among students but due to limited knowledge and understanding on how to go about the CEFR-aligned curriculum has hampered their implementation process.

Khair and Shah (2021) found in their study that teachers are generally in favour of the curriculum and have positive views in its implementation. However, their reservations were on the uncertainty of certain aspects of the curriculum for example project-based learning and other language development activities that they believe were not covered in the training they attended and need to be given attention too. Some teachers have problems in understanding the 'can do' statements. They believe the training did not cover a lot of things and it is needed for better understanding and development of certain skills in adapting the framework. The study also emphasised the need for more ongoing support for teachers rather than one-off training. These findings suggest that while teachers generally support the curriculum, the gaps in training and ongoing support leave them ill-equipped to fully implement key aspects, underscoring the importance of continuous professional development to ensure effective adaptation and application of the framework.

Sahib and Stapa (2022) identified challenges and issues faced in implementing the CEFR-aligned English language curriculum. Among the challenges and issues

identified were the lack of training for teachers, lack of teacher feedback as well as difficulty in overcoming literacy problems. The study also emphasised on the need for familiarisation of content, teaching methodology, and the elements of the CEFR framework for a successful implementation of the curriculum. These findings highlight that the cascade training model, with its insufficient emphasis on familiarisation, methodology, and structured feedback, fails to adequately address the foundational challenges of teacher preparedness, reinforcing the need for a more tailored and interactive approach to ensure effective curriculum implementation.

Nawai and Said (2020) reported that teachers who are implementing the CEFR-aligned curriculum in the rural schools are lacking in the familiarity of the curriculum framework, unable to integrate the CEFR framework in the teaching practices and are struggling in assessing students' proficiency based on the descriptors of the CEFR. The study suggested for the improvement of better in-service training, and suitable materials. The study also found that teachers are struggling with textbook content which are foreign and need more support materials to aid their teaching practices. These findings reveal that the cascade training model inadequately equips teachers in rural schools to navigate the complexities of the CEFR-aligned curriculum, highlighting the critical need for contextualised training, culturally relevant materials, and continuous support to bridge the gap between policy expectations and classroom realities.

Pillai (2021) has also identified some issues in the implementation of the CEFR-aligned curriculum. Some of the challenges in the curriculum implementation are the lack of reflective and communicative teaching styles, lack of student-centred teaching

and inadequate training for teacher understanding of communicative competence as well as student-centred learning strategies. It was also stated in the study that the current textbook is too foreign and stands as a challenge to those who are from deprived backgrounds. Textbooks and lessons that are based on local culture and locality would be helpful to ensure better understanding and develop a sense of connection among students. It was also stated in the study that inclusion of technology for language learning should be given consideration. The study also stated that some teachers may still be using traditional teaching methods as the result of insufficient training.

Based on the finding of the previous studies on curriculum implementation in Malaysia, one area that requires further investigation is the extent to which teachers' understanding of the CEFR-aligned curriculum is reflected in their classroom practices. While some studies have found a moderate level of understanding of the curriculum among teachers, these studies have also revealed that teachers' knowledge and practices are not aligned (Yin & Ahmad, 2021), and that teachers are still resorting to traditional approaches in their classroom practices due to their limited understanding of the curriculum (Sidhu et al., 2018). Darmi et al., (2017) finds that teachers' misunderstanding of the CEFR- curriculum leads to the misinterpretation of students' proficiency level according to the CEFR-framework which would actually affect teachers from implementing the lessons according to the right levels. This is a concerning finding, as it suggests that teachers may not be effectively implementing the CEFR-aligned English language curriculum in their classrooms.

Therefore, there is a need for a study that explores teachers' understanding of the CEFR-aligned curriculum through their classroom practices. Such a study would provide insights into the extent to which teachers are effectively implementing the curriculum, as well as the areas in which they require additional support and guidance. Furthermore, this study could help to identify the factors that contribute to teachers' inadequate understanding and curriculum implementation, such as inadequate training, sufficient materials, and teacher proficiency levels (Alih et al., 2021).

The literature suggests that the implementation of the CEFR-aligned English language curriculum for secondary schools in Malaysia is still facing challenges, particularly in terms of teachers' understanding and implementing the curriculum in classrooms. While some studies have offered insights into teachers' perception and level of understanding of the curriculum through cascade training, further investigation is needed. It is essential to explore the extent to which teachers' understanding of the curriculum is reflected in their teaching and learning practices, as well as the connection between teachers' curriculum understanding and their classroom practices. Additionally, there is a need to examine the effectiveness of different approaches to training and supporting teachers. By addressing these gaps in the literature, the study can help to improve the implementation of the CEFR-aligned English language curriculum for secondary schools and ultimately enhance student learning outcomes.

2.9 Summary

In this chapter, the researcher provided detailed literature to support the study by focusing on information related to the implementation of the CEFR-aligned KSSM English language curriculum for secondary schools. The discussion also related the curriculum to relevant theories, concepts, and affiliated studies. The next chapter will delve into the research design, the methodology used for the study, and the context of the study



CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

Since the study is qualitative in nature, this chapter discusses research methodology that was employed for the purpose of data collection and analysis procedures. The discussion in this chapter pertains to the data collection methods as well as sampling procedures and procedure employed for data analysis. This section describes how the chosen data collection methods have contributed to achieving the research objectives. This chapter also discusses the pilot study, as well as how trustworthiness was obtained for the study and ethical procedures that were adhered throughout the study.

3.2 Research Design

According to Creswell and Creswell (2017), research design guides one to carry out a study effectively. The choice of research design is a critical aspect of any study, as it determines the methods and approaches used to address the research questions effectively. In the context of this study, which examines teachers' understanding of the CEFR-aligned English language curriculum through the cascade training, a narrative inquiry was deemed the most suitable. This decision is grounded in the nature of the research problem, the objectives of the study, and the need to capture the depth and complexity of teachers' perspectives. Narrative inquiry involves collecting and analysing people's experiences (Denzin et al., 2023; Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). In this study, thematic narrative analysis, as emphasised by Riessman (2008), was employed to identify patterns and themes within teachers' narratives while preserving the

contextual integrity of their sharing. Riessman (2008) and Flick (2022) highlight that thematic narrative analysis is particularly useful for policy-relevant research, such as curriculum implementation studies, as it reveals commonalities and differences in stakeholder experiences. In this design, the researcher aimed to comprehend and interpret the meanings that individuals attach to their experiences by analysing their inputs and insights (Marshall et al., 2022; Clandinin, 2019). This design is particularly useful in studying complex and subjective phenomena, such as the teachers' understanding of the CEFR-aligned English language curriculum implementation in the Malaysian secondary English language classrooms. There are several reasons for narrative inquiry being used a research design for this study.

Firstly, it allowed for the collection of rich, detailed, and personal accounts of teachers' experiences with curriculum implementation (Marshall et al., 2022; Denzin et al., 2023). Through collecting and analysing teachers' interviews and guided reflections, the researcher gained a deeper understanding of their viewpoints, beliefs, and attitudes towards the curriculum implementation (Marshall et al., 2022; Denzin et al., 2023). This approach provided insights that might not have been captured through other research methods. (Denzin et al., 2023; Connelly & Clandinin, 1990; Clandinin et al., 1999; Clandinin, 2019).

Secondly, the narrative inquiry is aligned with constructivist paradigm, which emphasised the subjective nature of reality and the significance of comprehending individuals' encounters (Mandal 2024; Patton, 2014; Rosiek & Clandinin, 2019). This design acknowledges that individuals construct their perception of the world based on their personal encounters and experiences (Marshall et al., 2022). Therefore, it is

important to explore their stories by obtaining a deeper comprehension of their perspectives on curriculum implementation.

Thirdly, narrative inquiry allows for the exploration of social and cultural contexts that shape teachers' experiences with curriculum implementation (Lichtman, 2023; Flick, 2022). By analysing teachers' stories through interview and guided reflections, the researcher can uncover the cultural and social norms that influence their understanding of the curriculum (Lichtman, 2023; Marshal et al., 2024). This approach helps to identify factors affecting curriculum implementation (Lichtman, 2023; Clandinin et al., 1999).

Narrative inquiry proved to be an appropriate data collection method for this study as it enabled the researcher to explore the teachers' experiences with curriculum implementation in Malaysian secondary English language classrooms in depth. By focusing on their personal narratives, the method captured rich, nuanced insights into their challenges and successes. This approach allowed the researcher to understand the curriculum's impact from the teachers' perspectives, fostering a more authentic and comprehensive understanding of their experiences.

3.3 Participants of the Study

Participants who were involved in this study were eight English language teachers at secondary schools who were also holding the post of the head of the English language panel. As this study sought to understand participants' understanding and practices in terms of curriculum implementation, it was imperative to seek participants who could offer insights that were rich and deep into the topic that was being investigated (Stahl

& King 2020; Merriam & Tisdell, 2015; Lincoln & Guba, 1985). The goal of sampling was to select participants who could contribute with diverse and in-depth perspectives on the subject matter under investigation (Hennink & Kaiser, 2022; Tracy, 2020; Merriam & Tisdell, 2015; Dornyei, 2007). Hence, the participants for this study were selected based on purposive sampling (Lichtman, 2023; Denzin et al., 2023; Marshall et al., 2022). Thus, the heads of the English language panel were a good choice as they represented the English teachers in their schools to become the participants in the cascade trainings in regard to the KSSM CEFR-aligned curriculum at the district level.

Besides, the heads of the English language panel disseminated the knowledge gained from the cascade trainings held at district levels to the teachers at their respective schools. So, it is their understanding of the cascade training that will be reflected on the teachers at schools. Moreover, the heads of the English language panel are the third – tier training recipients who underwent the training within the scope of the Ministry of Education (Leong & Rethinasamy, 2023; Ong & Tajuddin, 2021).

Teachers who were involved in this study were also required to be teaching in secondary schools with a minimum of seven years of experience, teaching using the CEFR-aligned KSSM curriculum which was introduced in secondary schools in 2016. The number of years of experience stated above should be sufficient for them to have attended the cascade training to understand the current curriculum implementation and practice them within their classroom environments. To be able to understand how much teachers have understood the curriculum through the cascade training, the teachers selected for this study had at least attended two trainings on the new curriculum at the district level (courses were held between 2015 – 2020 for teachers to

understand new curriculum implementation and CEFR-familiarisation). The purposive sampling technique could supply the comprehensive data required for this research which brighten up the outcome of the study (Lichtman, 2023; Creswell & Creswell, 2017).

Teachers participating in this study are from secondary schools located in the Kinta Utara District in Ipoh, Perak. The reason for the selection of this district is the researcher has been working in the district for the past eleven years. The familiar environment in the district was helpful in collecting in depth data. Data being collected for this study involved personal reflection on the implementation of the CEFR-aligned English language curriculum. People do not usually want to share their in-depth self-exploration of the experience and what they feel to people whom they are not familiar with. However, they can open-up with someone they trust, in this case the interviewer (Polkinghorne, 2007; Parks, 2023). Building trust takes a long time. The extent of trust between a researcher and participants should be at a great level for the participants to reveal important and at times sensitive information (Holley & Haris, 2019; Josselson, 2007; Leavy, 2022).

Besides, the district had also successfully conducted the cascade training programmes for the CEFR-aligned English language curriculum for secondary schools in a systematic manner (Singh et al., 2021). As a result, the researcher could obtain details about the training sessions in terms of teachers' understanding in the context of this study. The heads of the English language panel might not fully represent the entire population of teachers in Malaysia, but rather gave valuable insights on how the cascade training they attended had impacted their understanding of the curriculum and

how the understanding was reflected in the planning and implementing the curriculum at their classroom levels (Holley & Haris, 2019; Marshall et al., 2022; Denzin et al., 2023).

While the eight participants mentioned above were directly involved in the study as participants to provide data, another four participants played a different role. These included two English language SISC+ officers from the District Education Department and two English language lecturers from a teacher training institution. They were involved in validating the data collected and serving as inter-raters for the inter-rater reliability.

The two SISC+ officers were selected due to their extensive experience in conducting qualitative research as part of their M.A. TESOL (Master of Arts in Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages). Their academic background ensures a strong understanding of qualitative research methodologies, particularly in data collection and analysis. They have also written numerous research papers which are qualitative in nature. Moreover, as state-appointed consultants, the SISC+ officers are tasked with mentoring and guiding teachers, particularly in implementing the CEFR-aligned curriculum. This role demands a high level of expertise in pedagogy, curriculum evaluation, and teacher training, making them well-suited for validating data in studies related to education and language teaching. The expertise of these SISC+ officers were utilised to validate the data collected through open-ended interviews, guided reflections and document analysis.

On the other hand, the two English language lecturers from a teacher training institute in Perak were selected as inter-raters for the inter-rater reliability because, they have advanced qualifications in conducting qualitative studies with the use of inter-rater reliability. They have also engaged in qualitative research and publication within the field of ELT (English Language Teaching). Their roles as educators and researchers and previous experience as inter-raters enable them with the analytical skills needed for accurate inter-rater reliability assessments.

3.4 Data Collection Method

This study is qualitative in nature and had employed three methods for data collection which were: a) open-ended interview, b) teacher reflection c) document analysis. These methods are considered potential ways of collecting data for qualitative studies (Marshall et al., 2022; Lichtman, 2023; Yin, 2015) and the utilisation of these methods is corroborated by findings from other studies on teacher understanding of curriculum implementation (Khoodorshi & Rahimi, 2022; Rahman, 2014; Anwar, 2020; Nuraini, 2020; Omar, 2019; John, 2018; Shapii, 2012; Wang, 2008; Karavas, 1993). These studies have shown that the said methods are among the effective ones for data collection process.

The data collection methods used in this study were adapted from previous studies which have connection with the current study in terms of teacher understanding and curriculum implementation (McGarry, 2021; Anwar, 2020; Nuraini, 2020; Rahman, 2014; Shapii, 2012; Wang, 2008; Karavas, 1993). These prior works, spanning decades of scholarly inquiry, provide a robust foundation for examining teacher understanding

and curriculum implementation. The following sections will shed light on the said data collection methods more in detail.

3.4.1. Open-ended Interview

There are multiple reasons why the open-ended interview method is appropriate for this study. Firstly, it allowed for a flexible and conversational approach to data collection (Vanover et al., 2021; Punch, 2013, Saldana, 2018). The researcher could tailor the interview questions to the specific experiences, stories and perspectives of each participant, which could lead to rich and detailed data gathered on teachers understanding of curriculum implementation in terms of classroom practices and how they are utilising the knowledge gained in the cascade training in their practices.

Secondly, the open-ended interview method allowed the researcher to delve into the complexity and depth of teachers' understanding of curriculum implementation in the Malaysian secondary English language classrooms. This is a complex topic. Therefore, the open-ended interview approach allowed the researcher to gather detailed information about teachers' experiences, understanding, and attitudes towards the curriculum implementation in terms of classroom practices (Mandal, 2024; Holley & Harris 2019; Punch, 2013).

Thirdly, the open-ended interview method allowed the researcher to establish rapport and trust with participants (Vanover et al., 2021; Saldana, 2018). By engaging in a conversational approach, the researcher could form a relationship with participants. This led to a more honest and open responses on their understanding of the curriculum and how they perceive it in their classroom practices (Brinkman, 2018).

In this study, the open-ended interviews were carried out twice, once before the teachers' lessons and another after the completion of their lessons as well as guided reflections. The first open-ended interview was focussed more on the teachers understanding of the curriculum. The second interview was to clarify details from their lessons based on the guided reflections and the first interview.

The instruments used for open-ended interview were adapted from previous studies that had the elements of teacher understanding of the curriculum (Shapii, 2012; Anwar 2020), curriculum implementation and classroom practices (Anwar,2020; Nuraini, 2020) and also on the impact of cascade training (Ong, 2022). These studies are relevant to the current study. Therefore, the instruments from these studies were adapted and made relevant to answer all the research questions in this study.

The interview questions are inline with the constructivist theory. Constructivism (Vygotsky,1978) emphasises that knowledge is constructed through personal experiences and social interactions, focusing on subjective understanding. Similarly, the interview questions require the participants to share their personal experiences on understanding the curriculum, understanding of the cascade training as well as reflecting their classroom practices. Moreover, constructivism (Vygotsky,1978) also considers the role of social interactions and contextual factors in learning, this element can also be found in the interview questions where the researcher tries to dig deeper on how teachers try improving the understanding of the curriculum through social interaction in their classroom practices.

Overall, the open-ended interviews with guided questions were suitable data collection method for this study as they facilitated the collection of comprehensive information about teachers' experiences and their stories with curriculum implementation in the Malaysian secondary English language classrooms. Besides, they allowed for the exploration in the complexity of the topic as well as opportunity to build rapport and trust with the participants. They also ensured that the interview stays focused and on-topic.

3.4.2 Guided Reflection

For this study the guided reflection is used to collect data on teachers' classroom activities and interactions through a detailed step-by-step reflection. It is written in an organised story-like reflective reporting by the teacher. This reflection provides a clear understanding of the objectives, learning outcomes, instructions, interactions, questions, and activities that take place during the lesson (Barkhuizen, 2017; Athanases & Sanchez, 2020; Bjønness, 2016; Nurkamto et al., 2022).

Guided reflection can give insight into the teacher's attitude and behaviour during the lesson. This can be useful for researchers (Dana & Yendol, 2019; Brookfield, 2017). This method is essential in cross-checking whether the teacher's understanding of the curriculum documents and support materials is reflected in their classroom practices as well as their portrayal of curriculum understanding through the interview (Barkhuizen, 2017).

Besides, guided reflection helps teachers to understand what they do in their classroom (Degife, 2022). Through guided reflection, teachers can explicitly reflect on their

implementation of the CEFR-aligned KSSM curriculum. This can help identify any problems or issues in their classroom practices that may hinder students' learning (Degife, 2022). By analysing the guided reflection records of teachers' activities and interactions in the classroom, the researcher could examine the patterns of their classroom practices to determine how professional development courses on the KSSM English language curriculum implementation had helped them in planning and implementing their lessons.

The guided reflection for this study was adapted from other studies that examined classroom practices (Khooroshi & Rahimi, 2022; Chen et al., 2023; Yaacob et al., 2020). These studies explored teachers' classroom practices through reflective practices. The guided reflection is organised in four categories based on Tyler's (1948) and Oliva's (2008) curriculum implementation models. The four categories are objectives, content, learning experience and evaluation. For each category there is a set of questions on the things that the teachers do, activities that they carried out and how students responded to the lesson. The guided reflections adapted from the previous studies are helpful for the current study that explored teachers understanding of the curriculum from the aspect of their classroom practices.

The guided reflection aligns well with constructivist theory by encouraging teachers to engage in reflective practices that emphasise active learning and personal experiences, reflecting on constructivism's focus on learning as an interactive and student-centred process. By prompting teachers to evaluate how they adapted their teaching to the current curriculum, the guided reflection supports the constructivist idea that knowledge is built through collective experiences.

The extent to which teachers understand the CEFR-aligned KSSM curriculum is reflected in their classroom practices. Therefore, guided reflection is a way to study whether teachers' classroom practices align with the curriculum and to assess their level of understanding in terms of implementing lessons in the classroom (Barkhuizen, 2017). The researcher resorted to use guided reflection as classroom observations for research purposes for Phd, EdD and Master studies are not permissible in Malaysian educational research scenario (Ministry of Education, Malaysia, 2020a).

3.4.3 Document Analysis

Documents are a useful means to obtain an understanding about participants' extent of understanding of a matter that is being studied. Creswell (2014) has put documents for qualitative data collections into two categories, namely private (journals, diaries, letters, and e-mails) and public documents (newspapers, minutes of meetings, and official reports). These documents help in organising and analysing qualitative data effectively (Vanover, 2021; Holley & Harris, 2019; Creswell, 2014).

For the purpose of this study, firstly, the documents that were used for analysis were teachers' lesson plan which is considered as a personal journal (Private document) on how they planned and reflected their lessons. The lesson plan is a crucial document to analyse teachers' understanding of the curriculum in terms of translating the Scheme of work and the syllabus into classroom practice by planning meaningful activities that are aligned to the curriculum. Teachers' lesson plan is a supporting document to understand the extent of teachers' understanding of the curriculum (Nurfitri et al., 2020; Saputra, 2019)

Secondly, pupils' worksheets or exercises used in the lessons were also collected as part of the data collection to check on teachers' curriculum implementation process (Denzin et al, 2023; Holley & Harris, 2019). These documents were crucial as it would be helpful for the researcher to understand teachers' understanding pertaining the curriculum and how the understanding is executed in their teaching and learning practices aligning the tasks with students' proficiency levels (Christison & Murray, 2021). Besides, it also allows the researcher to examine the teachers' actualising of the curriculum in terms of utilising appropriate teaching and learning materials for classroom practices through the documents. The documents were also used to compare what they have said in the interviews and how they carry out the lessons to study the depth of teachers' understanding of the curriculum.

3.5 The Pilot Study

The purpose of conducting a pilot test is to prevent from having questions that are vague and misleading (Wiersma & Jurs, 2009; Malmqvist et al., 2019) and also to ensure that the data collection methods actually lead to finding the answers to the research questions (Majid et al., 2017). The pilot test for this study, first, tested the comprehensibility of the instruments so that the teachers would not find it difficult to understand the questions during the actual research. Secondly, it also enabled the researcher to narrow down the categories that the researcher should look at to answer the research questions in the guided reflection as well as document analysis. The pilot test gave opportunity to the researcher to refine the questions as well as the procedures for actual data collection procedures so that it would be smooth without glitches. Noticeable errors in the instruments were corrected and rectified at this stage.

The pilot test was carried out at two secondary schools involving two teachers who fulfilled the requirements of purposive samplings as mentioned earlier. The trial sessions of the interview aimed to test the interview guides prepared for data collection from teachers. This was followed by piloting the instruments prepared for teachers' lesson reflection through the guided reflection and document analysis through the lesson plan and students' work analysis. To make sure that it was designed as such to be able to provide answers to the research questions, the guided reflections done by the teachers who took part in the pilot study was analysed. The discrepancies found in the instruments were taken into consideration and corrected before the actual data collection process took place. The same procedure was applied for document analysis where the instrument prepared by the researcher was used to analyse the documents to test how much teachers had understood the curriculum.

3.6 Data Collection Procedures

The collection of data was conducted for three months. All the interviews were done at the teachers' respective schools adhering all the guidelines established by the Ministry of Education. Interviews were done during the teachers' free period or after school hours without interrupting their daily activities at school and to do that, appointments were made via the school administrative department.

Upon the completion of all the procedures, the first the interview sessions was carried out. Upon the completion of the first interview session, an initial lesson plan was collected. The teachers were also given sometime to carry out their lesson and document the lesson by filling in the guided reflection given to them. The briefing to fill in the guided reflection was given after the first interview session. Since, this was

a long process teachers were given sometime and freedom. However, it was requested to them to adhere to a dateline given by the researcher. The dateline was not too strict and it was flexible as to not put too much pressure on the teachers.

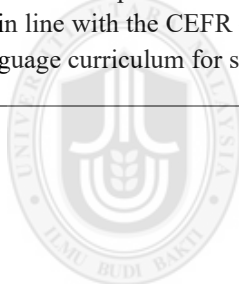
The guided reflection was to check teachers' consistencies in understanding the curriculum to their teaching practices and to see the extent of their teaching practice being aligned with the curriculum. Teachers were also given freedom to pick the lessons and skills that they would like to carryout to be submitted for this study. However, they were reminded that the lessons should be focussing on one of the main skills – reading, speaking, writing, and listening as prescribed in the scheme of work.

After completion of the lesson and guided reflection, teachers notified the researcher. The researcher made a second visit to their schools to collect the guided reflection, lesson plan (if changes were made from the previous ones), and worksheets were collected. After all the documents were collected, a second interview sessions were conducted. The second interview was meant to check on things based on the guided reflection and lesson documents such as lesson plan and worksheets.

It is to be noted that copies of the teachers' guided reflections and lesson documents were obtained with their written permission for the purpose of the study and their right for their lesson documents to be treated as private documents were adhered throughout the study. Additionally, the researcher clarified the purpose of the study to the participants and how the data collection procedures would help to answer his research questions as shown in table 2.

Table 2*Data Collection and Analysis*

Research Questions	Methods	Analysis
1 To what extent do teachers understand the implementation of the CEFR – aligned English language curriculum through the cascade training that they have attended?	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Open - ended interview• Guided reflection• Document Analysis	Thematic Analysis
2 To what extent has the cascade training helped teachers in the implementation of their lessons?	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Open – ended interview• Guided reflection	Thematic Analysis
3 What are the suggestions to stakeholders to improve the cascade training to develop better teacher understanding of the CEFR – aligned English language curriculum for secondary schools?	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Open – ended interview• Guided reflection• Document analysis	Thematic Analysis
4 What are the recommendations for other teachers to improve classroom practices to be in line with the CEFR – aligned English language curriculum for secondary school?	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Open - ended interview• Guided reflection• Document analysis	Thematic Analysis

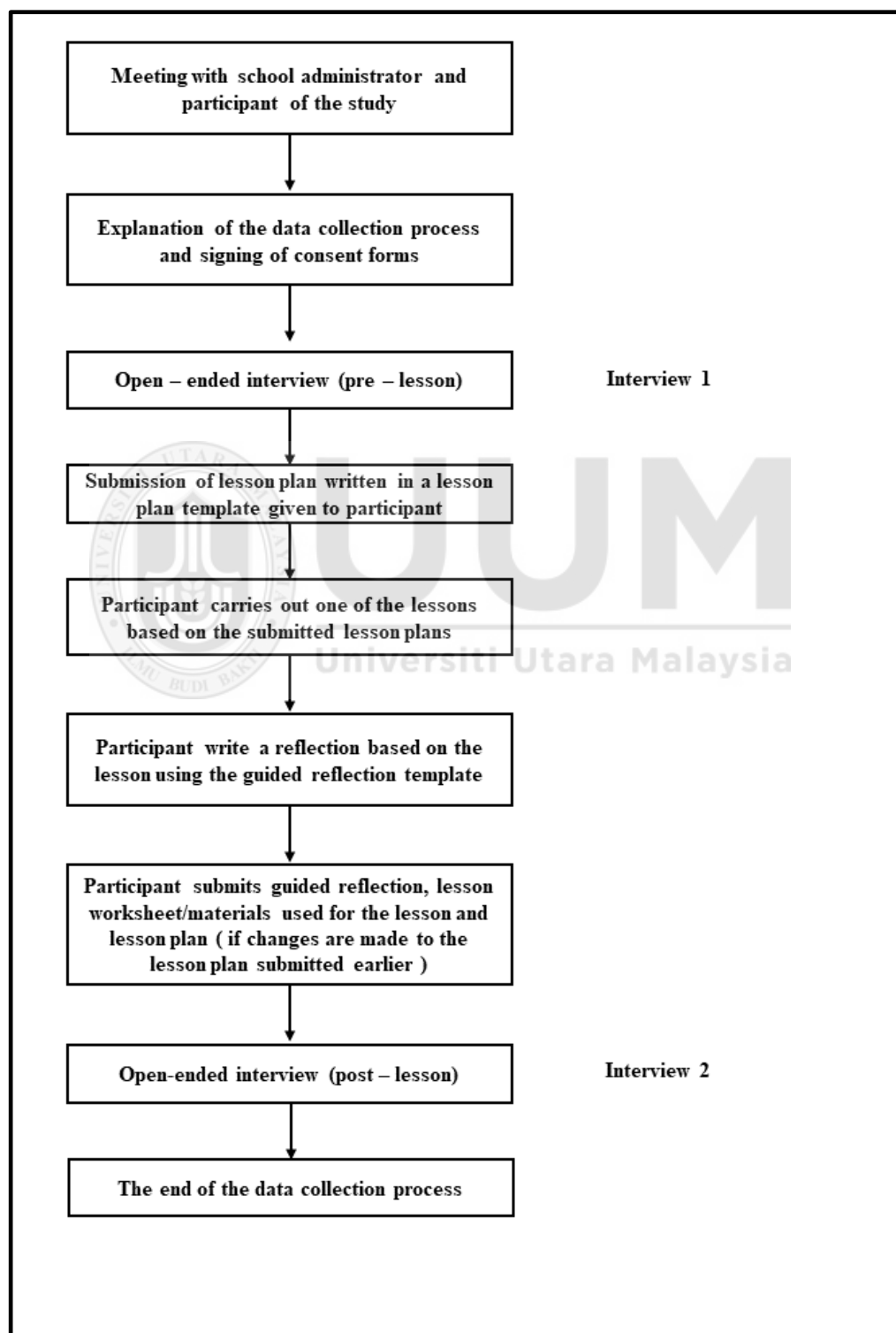


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Figure 8 shows a diagram that summarises the data collection process. The diagram further explains how the researcher obtains the data.

Figure 8

Data Collection Process



3.6.1 Ethical Consideration in Data Collection Procedures

Maintaining adherence to ethical considerations and guidelines is crucial for a researcher during the data collection process of the study (Lichtman, 2023; Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). There were a few guidelines that were observed throughout the data gathering period. Firstly, the participants were informed and their consent to partake in the research was obtained (Allan, 2020). Before consenting to participate, participants were thoroughly briefed on the research, its objectives, processes, potential risks and advantages, as well as their rights (Sullivan et al., 2021). Consent from the participants were obtained in written form without coercion or pressure (Allan, 2020; Sullivan et al., 2021). Both parties, the researcher and the participants signed the consent form.

Participants participated on their own free will (Arifin, 2018; Danny & Weckeser, 2022). Secondly, their anonymity and confidentiality have been assured. Their identity has been kept confidential (Arifin, 2018; Sullivan et al., 2021). Participants were made aware that their involvement was voluntary, and they reserved the right to withdraw from the research at any moment. Next, throughout the data collection period, participants were treated with courtesy and dignity without any form of exploitation or discrimination (Rose & Johnson, 2020; Arifin, 2018). The researcher was fully aware of the study and did not give room for his own biasness of this study.

The researcher obtained authorisation from all pertinent authorities to carry out the research (Arifin, 2018). Upon approval of this study after the proposal defense, the researcher submitted relevant documents to the Educational Planning and Research Division (EPRD) in Putrajaya, Malaysia and got the written permission to conduct the

study. Hereafter, written permission to conduct the study from the respected schools in the district was obtained from the state and district education department. Upon receiving the approval, the researcher made appointments with potential participants of the study and scheduled a meeting with the participants. The participants and the relevant authorities at the school were given detailed information of the study and the data collection procedure as to avoid any misunderstanding in the future.

3.7 Thematic Data Analysis

For this study, the researcher opted for thematic analysis. Thematic analysis was selected for data analysis in this research due to its adaptability (Braun & Clarke, 2022; Clarke & Braun, 2017; Barkhuizen, 2019). Besides, the versatility of thematic analysis enables the emergence of new themes. The new themes may not be related to the answer that is being sought for this study but something that might be an extension from the existing study (Barkhuizen, 2019; Clarke & Braun, 2017).

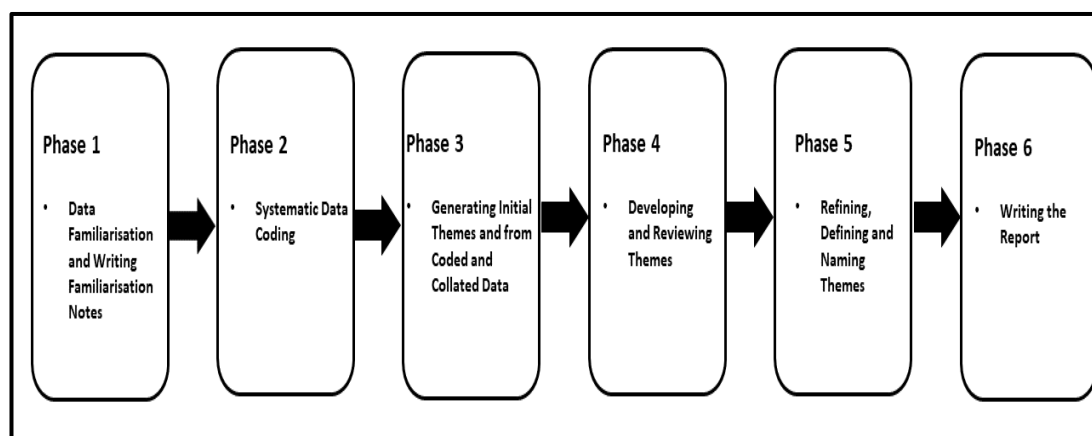
Thematic analysis is a widely used qualitative research method. It involves identifying and interpreting patterns and themes within data (Flick, 2022). It also involves the process of identifying and extracting the central themes within the data that is being investigated (Bryman, 2016; Clark et al., 2021).

Utilising thematic analysis, the researcher was able to discern the primary concepts and transcribe the data into themes that address the research questions concerning the understanding and practices of English language teachers in relation to the CEFR-aligned English language curriculum. For this study, the researcher followed the six

steps suggested by Clarke and Braun (2017) for thematic analysis. The steps are shown in the Figure 9:

Figure 9

Thematic Data Analysis by Clarke & Braun (2017)



3.7.1 *ATLAS.ti* Version 9 to Analyse the Qualitative Data

The data gathered in this research was examined utilising data analysis software. One of the most common qualitative data analysis tools is *ATLAS.ti* Version 9. The researcher used *ATLAS.ti* Version 9 as the tool that allowed the researcher to analyse the data in an organised manner. Besides, using this tool also made the data analysis process much easier and more practical compared to managing data in a manual way. The *ATLAS.ti* has simplified options to record and decode data as well as identifying the themes in a much simpler way (Friese, 2019; Ngalande & Mkwinda, 2014; Ronzani et al., 2020). To analyse the data obtained the researcher adhered to the following stages:

- a) The transcribed data obtained from the interview, guided reflection and lesson documents typed into MS Word documents and the files were given suitable names.

- b) The researcher created a research project folder in *ATLAS.ti* which used the keywords from the research questions.
- c) The data files in MS word documents were then uploaded through the menu 'project' and 'add documents'.
- d) The researcher studied and analysed the data before building relevant codes.
- e) The researcher then built the links between the codes and used the 'code manager' to build the links between the codes and quotations that have been identified.
- f) The researcher then builds a network of combined codes which finally develops into relevant themes.

3.8 Triangulation

For this study, the researcher employed strategies recommended by Lincoln and Guba (1985) and Stahl and King (2020) to ensure trustworthiness. One of these strategies is analyst triangulation. This involves having multiple analysts observe and review the study findings to offer a check on biased perception and shed light on overlooked areas through interpretive analysis.

In this study, the district school improvement coaches (SISC+), were the analysts reviewing the data. They validated the information gathered from the open-ended interviews, teacher reflections, and lesson documents. The SISC+ officers were chosen to carry out triangulation as they worked with teachers and have a deeper grasp of the teachers' understanding and classroom practices. Two SISC+ officers were requested to verify the information obtained from the participants of the study. Besides, the researcher also triangulated the data with different data sources. Upon completing the

coding for the first open-ended interview, it is triangulated with lesson document and guided reflection, similar codes identified and then it is developed into subtheme and then main theme was obtained.

To ensure the validity of qualitative research, the precision of the study results as detailed by the researcher must be assessed. Various data collection methods can be employed for validity, as suggested by Merriam and Tisdell (2015) and Willig and Rogers (2017). According to Tracy (2019), analyst triangulation serves as a valuable approach to enhance the reliability and validity of qualitative data by incorporating multiple data points gathered from various data collection methods, ultimately lending greater credibility and dependability to the findings.

3.9 Inter-rater Reliability

Inter-rater reliability is the level of consensus among different raters or evaluators when assessing similar data (McDonalds et al., 2019; McAlister, et al., 2017). The inter-rater reliability was used as a method to assess the trustworthiness of the findings of this study. This means, multiple researchers or evaluators independently assessed the data collected for this study. The purpose of using multiple raters was to ensure that the conclusions drawn from the study were not based on subjective biasness of a single researcher or evaluator (Ghanbar et al., 2024; Oluwatayo et al., 2019). The extent of agreement among the different raters could be measured using a statistical measure such as Cohen's kappa coefficient or Fleiss' kappa coefficient.

For this study Cohen's kappa coefficient was used. The Cohen's kappa was used for this study because it is a robust and widely accepted measure of inter-rater reliability

for categorical data that corrects for chance agreement, providing an accurate assessment of consistency between raters (Rau & Shih, 2021; Li et al., 2023). A high inter-rater reliability score will indicate a high level of agreement among the different raters, which increases the trustworthiness of the findings. Conversely, a low inter-rater reliability score will indicate a low level of agreement among the different raters, which can reduce the trustworthiness of the findings.

Once the experts had done the evaluation of the data, the inter-rater reliability score was calculated using the formula designed by Landis and Koch (1977). A high inter-rater reliability score would indicate a high level of agreement among the researchers. Which means it increases the reliability as well as the trustworthiness of the findings.

Table 3 shows the ratings of Cohen's Kappa inter-rater reliability by Landis and Koch (1977).

Table 3

Cohen Kappa's rating of inter-rater reliability.

Cohen's Kappa	Interpretation
0	No agreement
0.10 – 0.20	Slight agreement
0.21 – 0.40	Fair agreement
0.41 – 0.60	Moderate agreement
0.61 – 0.80	Substantial agreement
0.81 – 0.99	Near perfect agreement
1	Perfect agreement

In the current study, inter-rater reliability was used to assess the consistencies and agreements among two researchers who had evaluated the data collected on teachers' understanding of the CEFR-aligned curriculum implementation in Malaysian secondary English language classrooms. The two experts selected to be raters in this study are experts in the field of English language teaching, who are lecturers at a local teacher training institution and experienced qualitative researchers. They independently evaluated the data collected from the teachers via open-ended interviews, document analyses as well as guided reflections.

The researcher then compared their evaluations to determine the level of agreement between them. The agreement was measured using the Cohen's Kappa coefficient. The use of inter-rater reliability helped to ensure that the evaluation of teachers' understanding of the CEFR-aligned curriculum implementation was consistent and reliable, as the evaluation was not based on the biasedness of a single researcher (Ghanbar et al., 2024; Oluwatayo et al., 2019). To ensure fairness, the experts were provided with clear evaluation criteria and guidelines, so that they would evaluate the data using the same standards (Belur et al., 2021; McDonalds et al., 2019).

The computed Cohen's Kappa in this study is 0.610 and this value falls in substantial range of agreement between two raters under the Cohen Kappa's rating of inter-rater reliability by Landis and Koch (1977). This means that there is substantial agreement on the data between the two raters. Overall, using the inter-rater reliability as a method to assess the trustworthiness of the study findings had helped to enhance the validity and credibility of the research outcomes.

3.10 Trustworthiness of the Study

This section outlines the steps used to ensure credibility and reliability of the study. For building credibility, Guba and Lincoln (1994) and Guba (1981) suggest four concepts. Credibility, Transferability, Dependability, and Confirmability. These ideas provide the researcher with the ability to tell the truth about the environment and circumstance, as perceived and comprehended by the researcher. Furthermore, for the research to be credible, validation of assertions about human experience must be supported by personally reflective accounts in everyday language (Polkinghorne, 2007; Tracy, 2020) The next section describes the steps used to maintain rigour in this research.

3.10.1 Credibility

In this study, credibility was enhanced through member checking. After the interviews and guided reflections were done, participants were provided with transcripts of their responses. They were required to review and clarify their statements to ensure that their narratives were accurately captured (Vanover, 2021; Guba & Lincoln, 1982). Furthermore, participants were also asked to verify whether the key themes identified by the researcher aligned with what they had conveyed in the interviews and guided reflections. Besides, after data coding and thematic analysis, the preliminary findings were shared with the participants. Participants were required to confirm whether the interpretations accurately reflected what they meant. They were invited to provide comments and clarify any misrepresentations. Any discrepancies or feedback provided were incorporated into the final analysis to ensure that the findings remained faithful to what the participants have conveyed.

This is also supported by Yin (2015) and Stahl and King (2020). Requesting the participants to validate the data that has been interpreted was also a way to show transparency in the study (Vanover, 2021; Guba & Lincoln, 1982). The data collected will not be misrepresented or interpreted when the people concerned are checking the data collected from them. It is done as such because the credibility of the study is established by ensuring that the findings are sensible and credible to both the participants and readers (Miles & Huberman, 1994, King, 2020).

3.10.2 Dependability

An audit trail was systematically maintained throughout this narrative inquiry to enhance dependability and ensure transparency in the research process. The audit trail served as a structured record of all methodological decisions, data collection processes, and analytical procedures, allowing for the verification and replication of findings (Denzin et al., 2023; Flick, 2022; Guba & Lincoln, 1982). The audit trail in this study was established through several structured procedures, beginning with the systematic collection and storage of raw data. Given that the study employed multiple data sources which are open-ended interviews, guided reflections and lesson documents, it was essential to maintain organised records. All interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed verbatim, ensuring the accuracy and authenticity of participants' narratives (Denzin et al., 2023; Guba & Lincoln, 1982). Additionally, guided reflections and lesson documents were stored in a structured format, allowing for easy retrieval and cross-referencing during analysis (Flick, 2022). These measures ensured that the raw data remained intact and verifiable, providing a strong foundation for the research findings.

Beyond data collection, a critical component of the audit trail involved documenting the research process itself. A reflective journal was maintained throughout the study, capturing the researcher's observations, emerging themes, and methodological challenges. Notes taken during interviews and while reading guided reflections further provided context to participants' responses, recording non-verbal cues that could influence data interpretation. These detailed records helped mitigate potential researcher bias by offering a transparent account of how narratives were constructed and analysed (Vanover, 2021; Guba & Lincoln, 1982).

Another vital aspect of the audit trail was the systematic documentation of data analysis procedures (Vanover, 2021). This study employed a step-by-step process to code and categorise narratives, ensuring consistency in theme identification. To enhance reliability, a code-recode strategy was applied, where initial coding was conducted, set aside for a two-week interval, and then revisited to ensure consistency in theme classification (Denzin et al., 2023). Any discrepancies in coding were carefully examined and refined, reinforcing the dependability of the findings. Additionally, the rationale for merging, modifying, or discarding certain codes was recorded, providing a transparent trail of analytical decisions (Denzin et al., 2023; Flick, 2022; Holey & Harris, 2019; Clandinin, 2019).

Establishing an audit trail in this study was not merely a procedural formality but a necessary step to ensure research integrity, transparency, and replicability (Flick, 2022; Guba & Lincoln, 1982; Clandinin, 2019). Given the interpretative nature of narrative inquiry, it was crucial to provide a structured and verifiable account of how findings were derived (Holey & Harris, 2019; Clandinin, 2019). By maintaining a

clear and systematic research record, this study not only enhances its own dependability but also contributes to the broader field of qualitative research, offering insights into the rigorous documentation of research processes.

3.10.3 Confirmability

In this study, confirmability is attained through data triangulation (Guba & Lincoln, 1982; Lichtman, 2023; Denzin et al., 2023). Triangulation was employed through three distinct data collection methods: open-ended interviews, guided reflections and lesson documents. By integrating multiple perspectives, this approach reinforced the objectivity and accuracy of the study's conclusions.

The triangulation process began by comparing the open-ended interview responses with guided reflections. The interviews captured teachers' initial understanding, while the guided reflections allowed them to document their classroom practices. This comparison helped determine whether their understanding is sustained. Additionally, lesson documents, including lesson plans and instructional materials, were analysed to assess whether teachers' reported practices aligned with their actual classroom application.

By systematically cross-verifying data from multiple sources, this study minimised subjectivity, and reinforced confirmability (Guba & Lincoln, 1982; Lichtman, 2023). The findings were not derived from a single dataset but rather from a comprehensive analysis, ensuring that the research conclusions were authentic, reliable, and firmly rooted in what the participants were actually conveying (Denzin et al., 2023; Lichtman, 2023).

3.10.4 Transferability

Thick description was employed in this study for transferability to ensure that the findings could be meaningfully interpreted and applied in similar environments (Lichtman, 2023; Denzin et al., 2023; Guba & Lincoln, 1985). The first step in establishing transferability in this study was a comprehensive account of the research setting. The description included details about the school environment, student demographics, professional training opportunities, and curriculum implementation challenges.

In addition, detailed participant profiles were developed, outlining teachers' years of experience, prior CEFR training, and classroom practices. These descriptions helped situate the findings within specific professional contexts, enabling educators from similar backgrounds to assess the study's applicability to their own teaching experiences. The study also ensured thick description through multiple data sources, including open-ended interviews, guided reflections and lesson documents.

Teachers' perspectives were presented through direct quotes and in-depth narratives, preserving the authenticity of their experiences (Clandinin, 2019). Furthermore, the study acknowledged challenges, such as institutional constraints, student proficiency levels, and access to resources, allowing readers to critically evaluate the relevance of the findings to their own settings. By providing rich, detailed descriptions of the research context, participants, and findings, this study enhances transferability, enabling educators and researchers to draw meaningful insights applicable to their own professional environments or conduct a similar study (Denzin et al., 2023; Guba & Lincoln, 1985).

3.11 Summary

Chapter three of the study focuses on the methodology section, detailing the qualitative approach employed to address the research questions. Three methods of data collection are employed, including open-ended interviews, guided reflection, and analysis of documents related to teaching. For example, the lesson plans and pupils' worksheets. In this study, the researcher's primary responsibility is to identify appropriate samples, conduct interviews, and collect and analyse relevant data. Ethical considerations were strictly followed at every stage of the study in adherence to the code of conduct for qualitative research.



CHAPTER FOUR

DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

4.1 Introduction

This chapter meticulously outlined the approach employed for the collection of data for the study. This chapter looks into an exploration of Malaysian teachers' understanding of curriculum implementation within the classroom environment. This analysis was conducted through the lens of their knowledge of the curriculum acquired via the cascade training they have undertaken, and its practical application within the classroom setting. In this chapter, the researcher utilised personal knowledge and insights to collect the data, guided and supported by his supervisors.

4.2 Profiles of the Heads of the English Panel

This narrative inquiry collected data from eight heads of the English language panels who were selected purposively (Denzin et al., 2023; Flick, 2022; Creswell, 2017). They teach the lower and higher secondary English language classes at schools in the Kinta Utara District in Perak. Open-ended interviews were carried out with the teachers. It was then followed by completion of a teacher guided reflection, that teachers described and explained their classroom lessons followed by a post-lesson interview. Teachers' lesson plans and samples of students' work were also collected to be analysed. In order to ensure teachers' privacy and to adhere to the ethical guidelines of qualitative research, the identities of the teachers' who were participating in this study were preserved with anonymity where each of them were given a pseudonym (Merriam, 2015). The eight English language heads of their respective English language panels are Miss Cempaka, Madam Jasmine, Madam Mawar, Miss

Lilly, Mr. Lim, Mr. Adham, Madam Tulips and Madam Iris. There are only two male teachers in the study and six female teachers. This is because the number of male teachers with the designated roles and fitting in the criteria of purposive sampling for the study are very limited. However, this study is not collecting data based on gender differences. The data collected focuses on the strategies and reflections of these teachers, which are not inherently tied to their gender. Therefore, the gender composition of the sample is a natural consequence of the demographic reality and does not compromise the validity or reliability of the study's findings (Denzin et al., 2023). Instead, it represents a realistic cross-section of English panel heads in the district.

The summary of their profiles is shown in table 4:

Table 4

Profile of the Participants

No	Pseudonym	Gender	Age	Teaching Experience (years)	Experience as Head of the English language Panel
P1	Cempaka	Female	54	30	7
P2	Jasmine	Female	50	25	10
P3	Mawar	Female	42	17	6
P4	Lilly	Female	33	8	7
P5	Adham	Male	48	24	8
P6	Lim	Male	53	28	7
P7	Tulips	Female	45	20	7
P8	Iris	Female	38	14	7

4.2.1 Miss Cempaka

Miss Cempaka, one of the most seasoned participants in this study. She boasts a 30-year tenure in the field of English language teaching. Upon the completion of her training, she started her career in a rural primary school in Kelantan, later advancing her education at a local university and was subsequently securing a position in a secondary school in Ipoh. As an experienced secondary school teacher, she was a chief examiner for the SPM English language examination for a decade long. She has been leading the English language panel at her current school for the past seven years. She also had the opportunity to partake in cascade training related to the CEFR-aligned KSSM English language curriculum since its inception in 2016, till the most recent cascade training which was conducted online in 2020 on form 5 English language curriculum induction.

4.2.2 Madam Jasmine

With an illustrious 25-year career as an English language teacher in the Kinta Utara district, Madam Jasmine has creatively experimented the teaching and learning of English in a myriad of award-winning strategies in her English language classrooms. She was one of the selected students who was chosen after her SPM examination for the prestigious twinning programme between the Malaysian Teachers Training College (IPG) and a UK university for a degree in TESOL Programme in 1996. After the completion of her studies, she was posted to a rural school in Sarawak. After several years into her service, her matrimonial commitments facilitated her transfer to the Kinta Utara District, where she continues to serve until today. As a ‘Guru Cemerlang’ she has played a significant role in various English language initiatives both at district and state levels. She was also one of the master trainers during the

Teaching and Learning of Mathematics and Science in English (PPSMI) era where her role was to facilitate training to the Maths and Science teachers in Sarawak to improve their English language proficiency to teach the aforementioned subjects in the English language. At her currently school Madam Jasmine has been the head of the English language panel for the past ten years and had initiated various English language programmes for her students and professional development sessions for her teachers. Madam Jasmine had attended all the cascade trainings pertaining to the implementation of the CEFR-aligned KSSM curriculum since 2016 till 2020.

4.2.3 Madam Mawar

Madam Mawar, an English language teacher with 17 years of experience, teaching in a co-educational secondary school in Ipoh, Perak. An Innovative teacher, who has won several awards for her innovative classroom practices who has demonstrated commitment to innovate English language instruction to enrich the learning environment with the use of different methodologies. A graduate from a local university who was also awarded scholarship to pursue master's degree in literature in English locally. Madam Mawar has been the head of the English language panel at her school for the past six years and has been a key personal in the district for the Highly Immersive Programme (HIP) initiatives. Madam Mawar had attended three of the cascade trainings on the implementation of the CEFR-aligned English language curriculum.

4.2.4 Miss Lilly

Miss Lilly started her teaching career in 2015 and has been in service for the past 8 years. She is teaching in the suburb of Kinta Utara. Her school is located far from the

main town and can be considered as an outskirt. Miss Lilly completed her tertiary education at a local university in Malaysia. She was then accepted into a one-year post-degree teacher training programme (KPLI). She was posted to the Kinta Utara district and has been teaching at the current school since her first posting. Despite her limited experience, she has positive attitude towards her work-related commitments and has been actively contributing at the district level English language programmes. Miss Lilly has been the Head of the English language panel of her school since 2017 and had participated in three cascade training on the implementation of the CEFR-aligned KSSM curriculum.

4.2.5 Mr. Adham

Mr. Adham has been teaching the English language for the past 24 years and he has taught two schools in Ipoh, Perak. 12 years in his first school and another 12 years in his current school. Throughout his teaching journey, Mr. Adham has had the opportunity to teach the English language to students of different levels ranging from Form 1 to Form 6 (MUET). He had not only taught the English language and MUET but also had 5 years of experience teaching English for Science and Technology (EST). Mr. Adham is also a chief examiner for the SPM English language paper for more than 10 years and has five years' experience as a MUET examiner. He has also been the Head of the English language Panel at his current school for about eight years and attended all the cascade trainings related to the CEFR- aligned curriculum from 2016 till 2020. Apart from this, Mr. Adham has also been actively involved in various academic and co-academic activities organised at district, state and national level. He is also the most sought-after person for the district level SPM workshops.

4.2.6 Mr. Lim

Mr. Lim, an experienced English language teacher in an all-boys' school in Ipoh. For the past 28 years, he has been an inspiration for his students for setting a high academic standard for his students while nurturing healthy mind set. Mr. Lim holds a post-graduate degree in English literature from a reputable university in Malaysia. He was attracted to the teaching profession out of his passion to share knowledge and shaping young minds. His journey as a teacher began in a rural secondary school in Johor Bahru where he served for about seven years before returning to his hometown in Ipoh, Perak. He had served in several schools in Ipoh and his current school is the longest place he has ever been. He has been in the all-boys' school for about 13 years. Mr. Lim is also known for his obsession towards technology. His lessons are often technology-integrated that draw students closer to his lesson. He had also presented in several conferences on technology-integrated language learning which was well-received. With Mr. Lim's vast experience he has been the guiding light for the teachers at his school for the past seven years as the Head of the English language panel. He has also attended three cascade trainings pertaining to the CEFR-aligning curriculum since 2016.

4.2.7 Madam Tulips

Madam Tulips is a well-known seasoned English language teacher in the Kinta Utara district. She has been teaching for two decades. Her humble beginning into the teaching profession can be traced back to the year 2002, where she began her teaching odyssey at a Primary school in Kuala Lumpur after completing a 3-year diploma in education course in Melaka. After five years of teaching, she desired for a professional growth and her commitment towards lifelong learning propelled her to further her

studies at a local University in 2009, where she completed her degree in English language studies. Upon the completion of her first degree, she was then posted to a secondary school in Kuala Lumpur and after a few years, she moved to Kinta Utara, Ipoh following her husband. Madam Tulips has been holding the post of the Head of the English language panel for about seven years and has been involved actively in various English language programmes in the district. She is also an accomplished trainer for English language drama and has been training her students for the English language drama competitions for several years now. She has been consistently striving for her personal growth and influencing her countless students. Madam Tulips was also among head of the English language panels who have attended the cascade training for the understanding of the CEFR-aligned Curriculum. Between 2016 till 2020, Madam Tulips has attended three cascade trainings on familiarisation, formative assessment, and curriculum induction.

4.2.8 Madam Iris

Madam Iris is an English language teacher who has been teaching higher secondary students, form four and five throughout her 14 years of her teaching career. She has taught in several schools in Perak, and currently Madam Iris is teaching in a secondary school in the suburb of Ipoh, Kinta Utara. She has also been a very active person in the Kinta Utara district contributing to various programmes and sharing her innovational practices in tackling issues with low proficiency learners. Being the Head of the English language Panel of her school, she has successfully carried out several notable programmes at her school. The Highly Immersive Programme (HIP) activities that is carried out at her school has been the talk among the teachers at the Kinta Utara District for its effectiveness in encouraging low proficiency learners to learn and speak

in English. As the head of the English language panel, Madam Iris has attended four cascade training sessions in relation to the implementation of the CEFR-aligned curriculum for secondary schools in Malaysia.

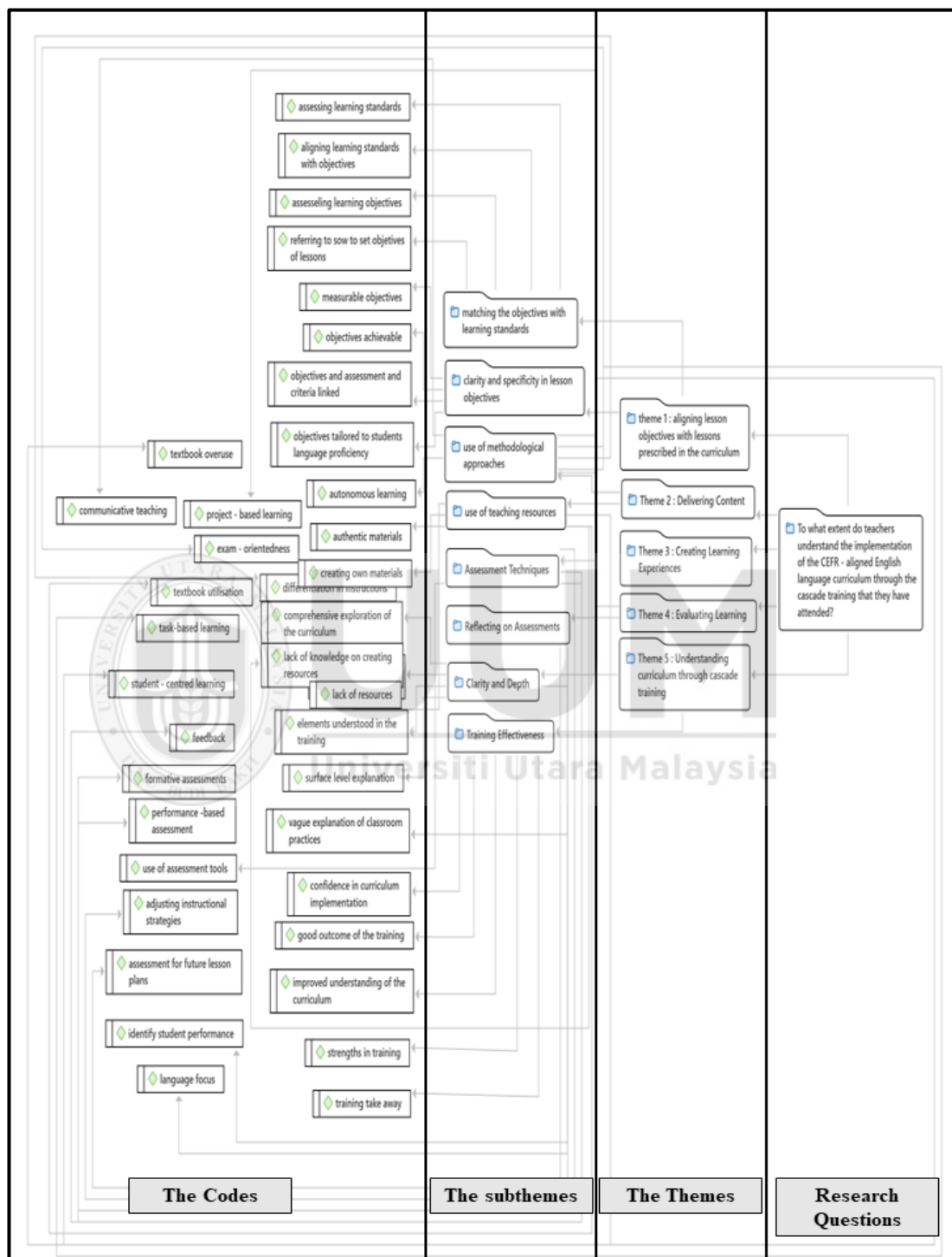
4.3 Research Question 1: To What Extent do Teachers Understand the Implementation of the CEFR-aligned English Language Curriculum Through the Cascade Training That They Have Attended?

The implementation of the CEFR-aligned English language curriculum necessitates a complete and comprehensive understanding of the teachers. This part of the study delves into the extent of teachers' understanding of the implementation of the CEFR-aligned curriculum through the cascade training sessions that they had attended. Hence, the discussion is organised into five themes, each shedding lights on a specific face of teachers' understanding of the curriculum, its implementation, and the role of cascade training in the implementation process. 'Aligning lesson objectives', 'delivering content', 'creating learning experiences', 'evaluating learning', and 'understanding the curriculum through cascade training' are among the themes that will be explained in this part. Through these themes and their respective subthemes, a holistic picture of the extent of teachers' understanding of the curriculum in their practices could be observed.

Figure 10 shows the diagramme of the formation of all the themes through the codes and subthemes that led to the 5 themes that provided answers to aforementioned research question.

Figure 10

Thematic analysis for the extent of teachers understanding of implementation of the CEFR-aligned English language curriculum through the cascade training that they have attended.

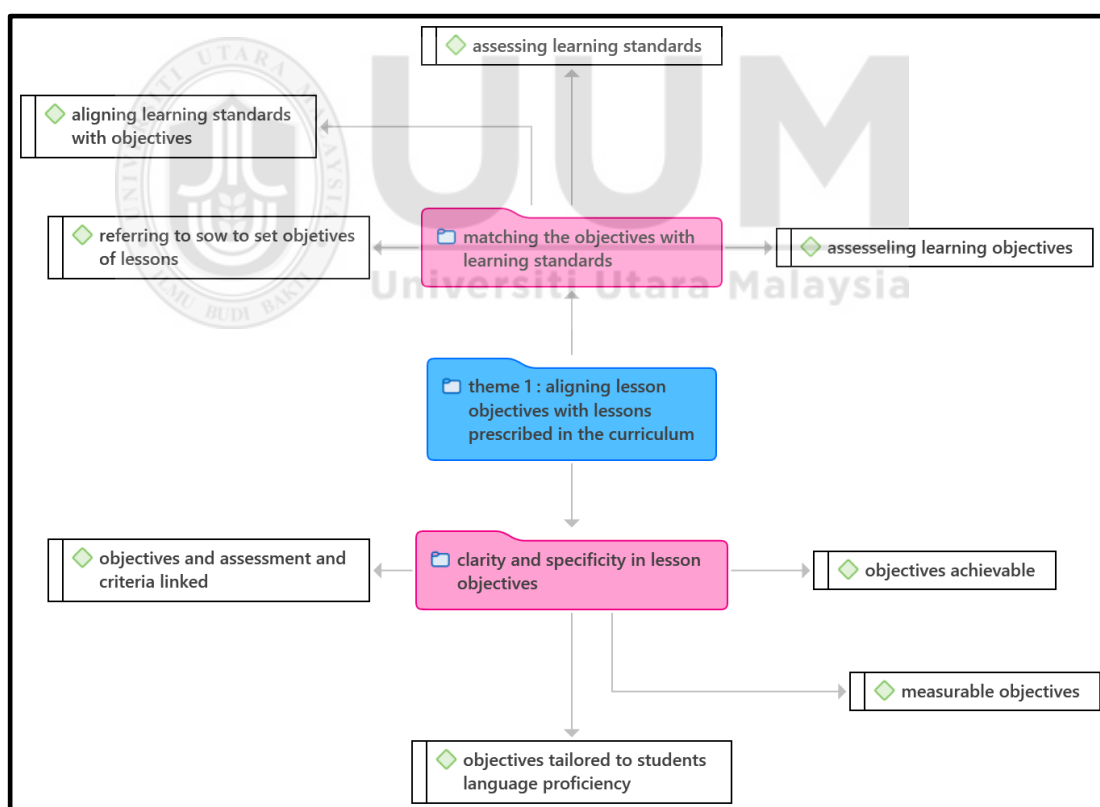


4.3.1 Theme 1: Aligning Lesson Objectives with the Lessons Prescribed in the Curriculum

Aligning lesson objectives with the curriculum is one of the essential elements in understanding the curriculum. As such, the journey for this study began with the discovery of teachers' understanding of the curriculum in terms of the alignment of the lesson objectives with the curriculum. This theme explored in two subthemes: 'matching the objectives with learning standards' and 'clarity and specificity in objectives'. Figure 11 shows the formation of the theme based on the two subthemes.

Figure 11

Theme 1: Aligning lesson objectives with the lessons prescribed in the curriculum



4.3.1.1 Matching Objectives with Learning Standards

Firstly, Madam Mawar recounted her experience of cascade training and how it actually made her realise that she needed to change the way she prepares her lesson plans after attending the training sessions. She stated that:

“...ermmm...after attending the course my style of writing my lesson objective changedlike, I used to write very vaguely ‘understand the text’ for a reading lesson but then I now changed eerm... to be more specific in building my lesson objectives so I write ‘Identify and list the main events in chronological order...’”

(Mawar, Interview 1, September 18, 2023)

Madam Mawar further added that,

“...to get my lesson objectives right, I refer to other documents such as the scheme of work, textbooks and one more,.....ermmm the Standard documents to understand what I am expected to do in the lesson. My objective is very important to be aligned with the learning standards errmm... so that it will be easy for me to decide the activities that I want to do in my lessons...”

(Mawar, Interview 1, September 18, 2023)

Being a seasoned educator, Madam Mawar has become well-versed in the intricacies of crafting lesson objectives. A testament to her understanding of the curriculum is her meticulously prepared lesson plan where the learning objective is aligned with the learning standards given in the scheme of work (SOW) as shown in Figure 12.

Figure 12

An Excerpt from Madam Mawar's Lesson Plan

CONTENT STANDARD/S:	Main Skill: Writing 4.2 Communicate with appropriate language, form and style Complementary Skill: Speaking 2.3 Use appropriate communication strategies
LEARNING STANDARD/S:	Main Skill: Writing 4.2.2 Spell written work on a range of text types with reasonable accuracy Complementary Skill: Speaking 2.3.1 Confirm understanding in discourse-level exchanges by repeating back what a speaker has said
LEARNING OBJECTIVES:	Main Writing By the end of the lesson, pupils will be able to spell their written work of 5 – 7 sentences of their partner's shopping habit with reasonable accuracy Complementary Speaking By the end of the lesson, pupils will be able to confirm their understanding in by repeating back what their talk partner has answered in an interview to complete a questionnaire

(Mawar, Lesson Plan, September 21, 2023)

The excerpt of Madam Mawar's lesson plan in Figure 12 shows how she aligned the content standard and learning standards given in the SOW with her lesson objectives.

Madam Mawar, in her second interview when she was asked about the designing of her lesson plan, she stated that:

"...eeermmm..I actually learn to understand the content standard and the learning standard during the cascade course.... That is when I really learn how to look at the syllabus and then the SOW and from there how to make lesson objective. The cascade course actually help me to better design my lesson..."

(Mawar, Interview 2, September 26, 2023)

Just like Madam Mawar, Mr. Adham who has twenty over years of experience in teaching of English language shared similar information. Sat poised in a room filled with vibrancy Mr. Adham talked about his lesson developing experiences. Mr. Adham, narrated his journey of cascade training and how it has impacted the way he developed his lessons. In terms of planning for his lesson he said that:

“...okay.. when I was asked to go for the course, I feel that I don’t really need to learn lesson planning as I was already aware about it okay..... but then, during the cascade training course, I learn the importance of having designing my lesson properly objectives okay....so that I know how teach my lesson properly...”

(Adham, Interview 1, September 20, 2023)

Offering more insights, he further added more details :

“ ...so I then understand that I have to see the SOW and also the textbook...that’s how the trainers actually teach us on how to designing the lesson plan....and after that course...I changed my way of preparing my lesson....okay I actually can see of what my student can achieve when plan my lesson with the ‘standard kandungan’ and also referring to the textbook...”

(Adham, Interview 1, September 20, 2023)

Mr. Adham’s explanation on his way of developing his lesson objective based on the SOW, Learning Standard Document and textbook shows his attempt to understand the curriculum. The following Figure 13 is a sample taken from one of the plans submitted to the researcher by Mr. Adham.

Figure 13

An Excerpt from Mr. Adham’s Lesson Plan

CONTENT STANDARD/S:	Main Skill: Reading 3.1 Understand a variety of text by using a range of appropriate reading strategies to construct meaning Complementary Skill: Reading 3.1 Understand a variety of text by using a range of appropriate reading strategies to construct meaning
LEARNING STANDARD/S:	Main Skill: Reading 3.1.5 Recognise independently the attitude or opinion of the writer in extended texts on a wide range of familiar topics and some unfamiliar contexts Complementary Skill: Reading 3.1.2 Understand specific details and information in extended texts on a wide range of familiar topics and some unfamiliar contexts
LEARNING OBJECTIVES:	Main Reading By the end of the lesson, pupils will be able to recognise the attitude of the writer in the text “Is print media doomed?” by skimming for keywords that reflect the attitude. Complementary Reading By the end of the lesson, pupils will be able to show understanding of specific details and information in the text “Is print media doomed?” by locating keywords that are similar in the questions and options in order to answer 6 multiple choice questions

(Adham, Lesson Plan, September 26, 2023)

Based on the content standards (CS), learning standards (LS) and learning objectives (LO), it could be seen that Mr. Adham has actually used the keyword from both the content standards and learning standards to develop the lesson objectives so that the lesson objectives are relevant. Mr. Adham said that:

“...ah okay...hmmmm..In order to make my lesson plan relevant, at the early stage of building the lesson, I use the keywords in the CS and LS itself to actually develop my lesson so that..... I will not deviate from the curriculum and stick to what I suppose to teach...”

(Adham, Interview 2, October 03, 2023)

Mr. Adham attributed his ability to draw the learning objectives from the cascade training that helped him to understand the content of the curriculum which further helped in implementing the curriculum effectively. While Mr. Adham and Madam Mawar had attempted to show their understanding of the curriculum implementation, through the development of the lesson objectives, it is not the same with some other participants. For example, Miss Cempaka and Madam Iris, despite having attended more than four cascade training sessions on curriculum implementation, they seem to not be able to sync their learning objectives, they tried to show some understanding of the curriculum but then it only reflects how they have misunderstood the process of developing learning objectives. Miss Cempaka related her cascade experience relating her development of lesson objectives aligned with the prescribed curriculum. The following is what Ms. Cempaka said about her cascade training experience relating to aligning her lesson objectives with the curriculum development:

“...errrm....well.... the cascade training was good, the trainers helping us to understand the curriculum, ...I learn to develop my lesson plan and objective when I went for the course.....and yeah, I learn to write my lesson objective more clearly now....”

(Cempaka, Interview 1, August 22, 2023)

Though Ms. Cempaka's sharing on her understanding based on the cascade training on how to build her lesson plans and objective is positive, a sample of her lesson plan that was developed from one of her lessons as shown in Figure 14 shows her understanding on matching the objectives is still vague as what she intends her students to achieve at the end of the lesson seem to be rather ambiguous.

Figure 14

An Excerpt from Miss. Cempaka's Lesson Plan

CONTENT STANDARD/S:	Main Skill: Reading 3.1 Understand a variety of text by using a range of appropriate reading strategies to construct meaning Complementary Skill: Speaking 2.1 Communicate information, ideas, opinions and feelings intelligibly on familiar topics
LEARNING STANDARD/S:	Main Skill: Reading 3.1.6 Recognise with little or no support typical features at word, sentence and text levels of a wide range of genres Complementary Skill: Speaking 2.1.2 Ask about and explain advantages and disadvantages of ideas plans arrangements
LEARNING OBJECTIVES:	Main Reading By the end of the lesson, students will read a text about shopping and answer questions in the textbook. Complementary Speaking By the end of the lesson, students discuss the shopping therapy

(Cempaka, Lesson Plan, August 24, 2023)

Miss Cempaka's objectives of her lesson do not harmonise with the content standard and learning standard as her lesson objectives are not specific and indefinite. In her guided reflection, Miss Cempaka has stated the following:

"When I develop my lesson plan, I just focus on what I want to do in class and then prepare according to skill, if reading I just write reading skills in my lesson objective so that it will be easy for anyone who reads my lesson plan including me to understand the lesson plan and what I will be focussing on."

(Cempaka, Guided Reflection, August 28, 2023)

In the second interview post her lessons, Miss Cempaka explained on how she developed her lesson objectives:

“...hmmmm well....eeerrr...I identify the learning objectives based on the textbook....emmm....the objective is to finish the chapter on reading and speaking and the expected outcome is for the students to complete the exercises and understand the content of the text and aaaa.... how they show that they understand the text is what the lesson is looking into...”

(Cempaka, Interview 2, September 05, 2023)

Miss Cempaka despite expressing her understanding of the cascade training being very useful, is unable to develop lesson objectives that are clear and vivid on what she intended to achieve through her lesson. Her explanation on how she developed her lesson plans does not reflect on the ideas of developing lesson objectives based on the curriculum documents. The only document that was mentioned by Miss Cempaka on developing lesson objectives was the textbook. Visit to Madam Iris' school yielded a similar result to Miss Cempaka. Asking about Madam Iris' cascade training experience in developing her lesson objectives, she stated that:

“...I do not know how to say this..ermmmm.... I didn't understand much during the cascade training, ...aaaand there was a lot of things that I was unsure and there wasn't room for me to actually clarify during the cascade training session., but, I believe I followed the right process of developing the lesson objectives...”

(Iris, Interview 1, September 29, 2023)

Madam Iris was less hesitant in expressing her lack of understanding and explained her unhappiness over the cascade training which she felt has affected her development of her lesson that had impacted the objective that she needs to develop for her lessons:

“...erm I think that the cascade training was not very effective for me as I find it difficult to understand a lot of things, and I think this has affected how I develop the objective and also the entire lesson..”

(Iris, Interview 2, October 17, 2023)

The extent of Madam Iris' understanding on the development of lesson objectives aligned with the curriculum can further be seen in the excerpt of her lesson plan in Figure 15.

Figure 15

An excerpt from Madam Iris' Lesson Plan

CONTENT STANDARD/S:	Main Skill: Listening 1.1 Understand meaning in a variety of familiar context Complementary Skill: Speaking 2.1 Communicate information, ideas, opinions and feelings intelligibly on familiar topics
LEARNING STANDARD/S:	Main Skill: Listening 3.1.2 Understand specific details and information in extended texts on a wide range of familiar topics Complementary Skill: Speaking 2.1.4 Explain and justify own point of view
LEARNING OBJECTIVES:	Main Listening By the end of the lesson, pupils will be able to listen to the text and answer the 5 questions in the text book Complementary Speaking By the end of the lesson, pupils will be able to talk about ways to spending money.

(Iris, Lesson Plan, October 10, 2023)

The lesson objectives developed are based on the textbook exercises alone and the ability to answer the questions in the textbook. This was also clarified by Madam Iris:

“... eeermmm I develop my lesson plans based on the textbook, if students can do the exercises in the textbook it means they understand the lesson and my lesson objective is clear about it....”

(Iris, Interview 2, October 17, 2023)

It can be said that the lesson objectives developed by Madam Iris is task based in nature, where it requires students to complete a task in the textbook, but it did not reflect on the skills that is supposed to be developed as mentioned in the content standard and learning standard. Although the first objective is measurable in terms of completing the task, the second objective is very hazy as of what element of speaking should be developed in the lesson. To summarise, teachers understanding of the curriculum in terms of matching the objectives with learning standards are varied.

Madam Mawar and Mr. Adham displayed a clear progression in aligning the lesson objectives with the content and learning standards, by showcasing an informed approach towards curriculum implementation as well as their guided reflections and interviews. In contrast, Madam Iris and Miss Cempaka illustrated the challenges that may be faced by teachers in aligning the lesson objectives with the learning standards. Despite attending the cascade trainings, their lesson objectives lack connection with the content standard and learning standard.

4.3.1.2 Clarity and Specificity in Lesson Objectives

The subtheme ‘clarity and specificity in lesson objectives, serves as a measure towards teachers’ understanding of the curriculum in the lesson planning process to develop precise and clear objectives that would enable teachers to design lesson activities that are tailored towards achieving the lesson objectives. The extent to which teachers can translate the curriculum documents to a well-detailed measurable goal for the lessons, is an indicator of their understanding of the CEFR standards in the application of the lessons. Therefore, the subtheme clarity and specificity of lesson objective is a crucial element in actualising the curriculum aims with the classroom.

Mr. Lim’s lesson plan in Figure 16 shows, the clarity that he has in developing his lesson plan. Being aligned with the content standard and learning standard, his lesson objectives provide detailed inputs on what he intends to achieve in his lesson. Adding on to the success criteria that is aligned with the lesson objective further enhanced the idea of what he expects the students to be able to do throughout his lesson to achieve the objective of his lesson. The lesson objective also measures in a way of what students can do, just like the CEFR ‘can do’ statements.

Figure 16

An Excerpt from Mr. Lim's Lesson Plan

CONTENT STANDARD/S:	Main Skill: Reading 3.1 Understand a variety of text by using a range of appropriate reading strategies to construct meaning Complementary Skill: Speaking 2.1 Communicate information, ideas, opinions and feelings intelligibly on familiar topics
LEARNING STANDARD/S:	Main Skill: Reading 3.1.6 Recognise with little or no support typical features at word, sentence and text levels of a wide range of genres Complementary Skill: Speaking 2.1.2 Ask about and explain advantages and disadvantages of ideas plans arrangements
LEARNING OBJECTIVES:	Main Reading By the end of the lesson, pupils will be able to recognise the typical features of a magazine, an advertisement, FAQs and a personal email by listing the tone, punctuation, format and language used. Complementary Speaking By the end of the lesson, pupils will demonstrate the ability to discuss the advantages and disadvantages of at least two different ideas, plans, or arrangements, showing clear understanding and reasoning in their explanations, as evidenced by participating in a structured debate or discussion activity and receiving a satisfactory rating on a speaking rubric.
SUCCESS CRITERIA :	Main Skill (Reading) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Correctly identify the genre of each text (magazine, advertisement, FAQs, personal email). • Accurately describe the tone of each text. • Identify key punctuation features typical of each genre. • Describe the format specific to each genre. • Point out and explain the language characteristic of each genre. Complementary Skill (Speaking) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Actively participate in a structured debate or discussion. • Understand and clearly express at least two advantages and two disadvantages for each idea, plan, or arrangement. • Use clear, coherent language appropriate to the topic. • Provide logical explanations for the advantages and disadvantages mentioned. • Achieve a satisfactory or higher rating on the speaking rubric.

(Lim, Lesson Plan, September 28, 2023)

Mr. Lim stated that, having clear lesson objectives allow him to prepare for his lessons better and he knows what exactly needs to be done in his lesson. He further stated that:

“...hurmmm.....the cascade training actually help me to align the learning standards and content with the lesson objective. I also learn to develop my lesson objectives with measurable outcome so that I know what I want to achieve at the end of the lesson...aaa I refer to the

SOW, textbook, and also the assessment guide provided by the MOE...”

(Lim, Interview 2, October 5, 2023)

Mr. Lim further stated in his guided reflection that he would be able to see the clarity of his lesson objectives when the success criteria he developed based on his lesson objectives are being actualised by the students during the lesson:

“I could check on students’ understanding of the lesson by checking on the things they do based on the success criteria”.

(Lim, Guided reflection, September 29, 2023)

Mr. Lim’s lesson objective is developed with much clarity, where the objectives are measurable and achievable, and it provides clarity on the aspect of the lesson being measured. Mr. Lim’s development of his lesson objectives, offer a vivid description of his clear understanding of developing lesson objectives from the curriculum documents prescribed by the Ministry of Education. However, it is completely a different story with Miss Lilly, who displayed a foundational level of understanding. The following are the lesson objectives developed by Miss Lilly shown in Figure 17.

Figure 17

An Excerpt from Miss Lilly’s Lesson Plan

CONTENT STANDARD/S:	Main Skill: Speaking 2.3 Use appropriate communication strategies Complementary Skill: Reading 3.1 Understand a variety of text by using a range of appropriate reading strategies to construct meaning
LEARNING STANDARD/S:	Main Skill: Speaking 2.3.1 Confirm understanding in discourse-level exchanges by repeating back what a speaker has said Complementary Skill: Reading 3.1.4 Use independently familiar and some unfamiliar print and digital resources to check meaning and extend understanding
LEARNING OBJECTIVES:	Main Speaking By the end of the lesson, pupils will be able to talk about technology Complementary Reading By the end of the lesson, pupils will be able identify the meaning of the words given.
SUCCESS CRITERIA	Main Skill : Speaking <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can speak about technology Complementary Skill : Reading <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Read and explain the text to friends

(Lilly, Lesson Plan, September 3, 2023)

Miss Lilly's lesson objectives and success criteria reflects her foundational level understanding. Although her lesson objectives and success criteria reflect the ideas presented in the CS and LS, it does not provide a measurable objective which would be able to measure students' understanding. The opportunity to see a measurable outcome on students' understanding is very vague here compared to what Mr. Lim has given in his lesson objectives. Furthermore, Miss Lilly's main reference for her lesson objectives is the textbook that she uses:

"I just refer to the textbook to develop my lesson plan, it is much easier..."

(Lilly, Guided Reflection, September 4, 2023)

She also stated that the cascade training did not help her much in understanding of the development of the lesson objectives and she often feel confused:

"...I went for the cascade training and ya there was a part where we have to develop lesson plans and decide lesson objectives and measurable outcome of the lesson, It was very difficult to understand as there was not practical part for us to try doing the lesson plan...errm..."

(Lilly, Interview 2, September 6, 2023)

Miss Lilly's lesson objectives despite having aligned with the content standard and learning standard, it still lacks the clarity and specificity as it is unable to show how students language progress in the lesson can be measured. The 'can do' statements in the lesson objectives are rather vague and has room for improvement.

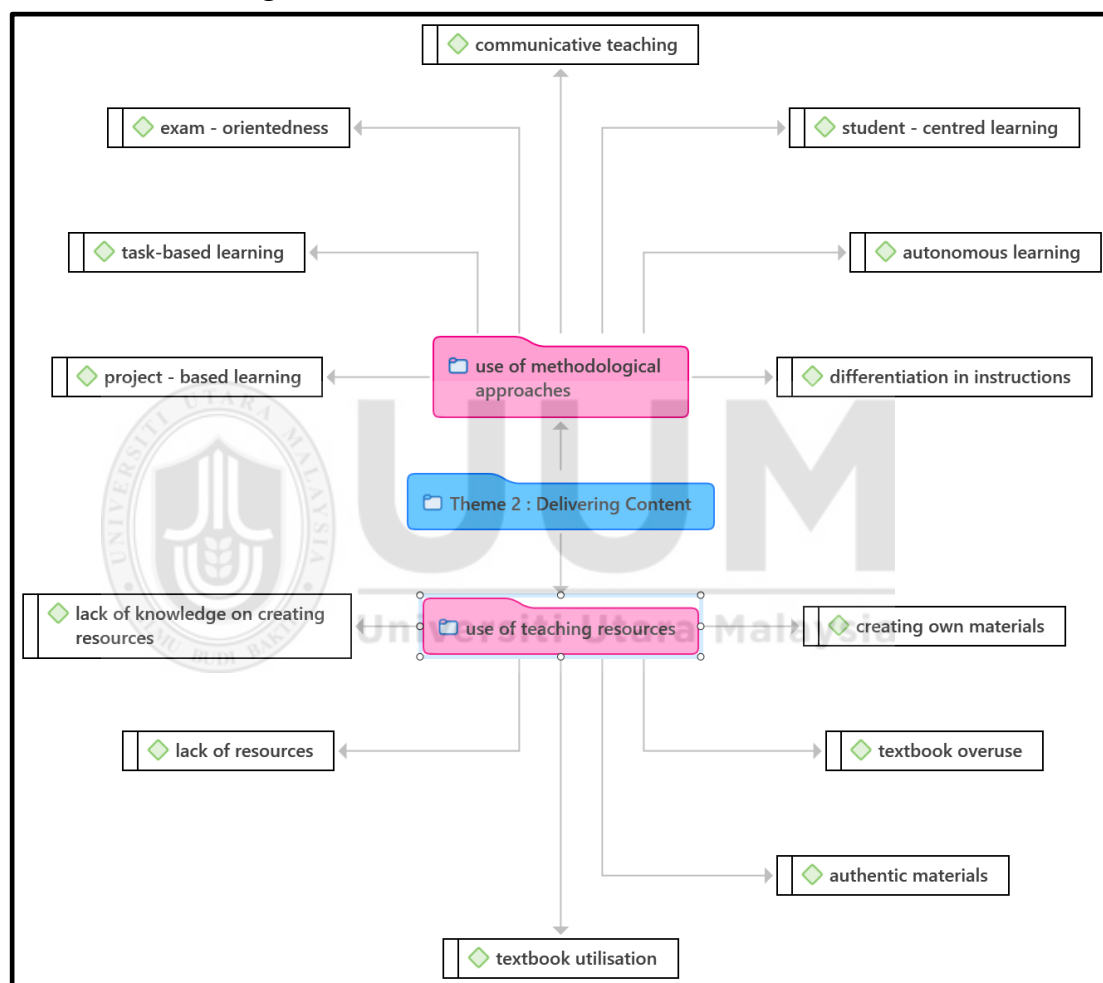
4.3.2 Theme 2: Delivering the Content

Content delivery is important in the effective implementation of a curriculum. This is because content delivery is the medium in which instructional goals are achieved in line with the curriculum objectives. Moreover, content delivery is not merely a component of curriculum implementation, but it is a way where the curriculum is made to come to life through classroom practices and achieve its purpose. The explanation

of the teachers has led to the theme ‘delivering the content’ in terms of teachers’ understanding of the curriculum implementation through the cascade training. The theme is developed from two subthemes which are the ‘use of methodological approaches’ and ‘use of teaching resources’ as shown in Figure 18.

Figure 18

Theme 2: Delivering Content



4.3.2.1 Use of Methodological Approaches

Madam Jasmin and Madam Mawar conveyed their affinity for student-centred learning. Both of them have similar thoughts on approaching the student-centred learning. While Madam Jasmine’s discovery of student-centred learning is an

enlightenment for her, for Madam Mawar it was a journey filled with trials and errors which she succeeded after attending the cascade training:

“...I started explore more student-centred learning approaches in my classroom practices after attending the cascade training.. as I understand now how I can use this style in my classroom...”
(Jasmine, Interview 1, August 28, 2023)

“..I knowlar this student-centred learning but did not know how to approach it, I tried before the cascade course, but I think it didn't work well in my classroom, but after the course,.. I understand how to do student-centred learning activity in my class better...”
(Mawar, Interview 1, September 18, 2023)

Similarly, Mr Lim and Mr Adham highlighted the journey into embracing the communicative approach in their teaching in developing communicative competence among students and to do this they pursued various strategies beyond the conventional methods such as the student-centred learning, task-based learning, autonomous learning and project-based learning. They further went into details that the communicative approach is not a single method by a fusion of diverse practices which they have been exploring:

“...ermm..some strategies I learned during the cascade training that have been very helpful in my classroom are task-based learning and project-based learning where all these strategies are student-centred...and they are also in line with the communicative approach where the focus is communicative competence... I learnt about these before, the cascade training actually improved my understanding...”
(Lim, Interview 1, September 22, 2023)

“...I learn many new things in the cascade training programme okay...for me I can get a clear picture of how I can be more student-centred when carrying out my lessons and... I understand that autonomous learning is important and...okay to do that I can actually have more student-centred activities like project-based learning which help my learners to explore the language deeper and provide opportunities for them to explore the language...”
(Adham, Interview 1, September 20, 2023)

Madam Jasmine, Madam Mawar, Mr. Lim and Mr. Adham had further vividly illustrated their methodological approaches in line with the CEFR-aligned curriculum

in their lesson plannings as well as classroom practices. They have skilfully included student-centred learning to align their teaching strategies with the objectives of the curriculum. Each teacher showcases a unique way to approach student-centred learning as shown in the following extract:

“Pupils listen to the podcast, take note of the vocabulary and discuss the content in pairs. Then, they form a small group with two pairs and exchange ideas. Students then present the outcome of their exchanges.”

(Jasmine, Lesson Plan, August 28, 2023)

“Pupils go through the second half of the questionnaire to ensure understanding of the questions. Pupils pair with a new talk partner and ask pupil A to interview pupil B using the second half of the questionnaire. Pupil A is to repeat back what Pupil B has answered. When pairs are finished, they swap roles. Pupils reflect on the activity by discussing what they learned about their partner’s shopping habits and how well they managed to spell their sentences.”

(Mawar, Lesson Plan, September 21, 2023)

“Pupils are given a few different situations. They are to form a group of four. In the group they are to do a role-play. They should use all the key words learnt in task B.”

(Lim, Lesson Plan, September 28, 2023)

“Pupils read the text silently. Pupils then divided into small groups. Each pupil read a paragraph and then share the idea of the paragraph they read. Based on the discussion pupils pair up answer questions in the task sheet.”

(Adham, Lesson Plan, September 26, 2023)

The teachers’ commitment in student-centred learning was further evident in their guided reflections that was written post their lessons. The teachers in their reflections show their quest towards implementing student-centred learning through a diversified approach. For Madam Jasmine, it was a difficult move to adapt student-centred learning yet, she tried her best to make use of the student-centred learning activities in her classroom. Similarly, Madam Mawar, Mr. Adham, and Mr. Lim, made student-centred as part of their practices. The teachers’ guided reflections stated the following:

“It is actually very difficult to do student-centred activity when it comes to listening, so I tried with the knowledge I gained from the cascade training to use activities related and make it student-centred. For example, for this lesson, I make them listen the audio and after listening I want them to discuss the idea. After the discussion, I want them to explain together what they have learnt. The answer will only be discussed at the end.”

(Jasmine, Guided Reflection, September 4, 2023)

“Through the training I learn that the CEFR curriculum should be using Action-oriented approach, so I make sure, there are a lot of activities in my lessons to achieve my lesson objectives and also to make sure my students practice the language through the lesson.”

(Mawar, Guided Reflection, September 26, 2023)

“I always make sure there are activities in my lesson where students need to carry out hands-on practices such as role play, pair work or even group discussion for the purpose of practicing the language.”

(Lim, Guided Reflection, September 29, 2023)

“I make sure, there are always some activities that involve students to take do discussions or even simple projects that would develop their language skills along with their thinking skills.”

(Adham, Guided Reflection, September 26, 2023)

Though student-centred methodologies are prevalent in the teachers' classroom practices as a result of exposure during the cascade training, it was not the case for all teachers. For some the journey of implementing the curriculum was not a bed of roses. Madam Tulips, felt like whatever, that she learnt from the cascade training was not of use for her as she felt it was too general and could not fit in her classroom practices;

“...uhm...what I learn in the cascade training was very general, you see uhm...and it does not cater to all types of students... and...and...I have very weak students, when I ask them to do something in class my students often don't understand...and... they look at me expecting me to give them all the information...uhm... It's very difficult to try student-centred learning with them when they don't understand...”

(Tulips, Interview 1, September 27, 2023)

Meanwhile, in the case of Miss Cempaka, she felt that the trainers were not helpful in making her understand the content of the training and the approaches, that she navigates the classroom lesson based on her minimal understanding:

“...errr...I feel that the cascade workshop not very helpful for me. I tried to understand but the trainer was not helpful,... So I could not understand many things from the training, what more on the different style....and I sometime try group activity or pair activity but then I have a lot to cover so I can't make all lessons with activities as I have to finish the syllabus before year end...”

(Cempaka, Interview 1, August 22, 2023)

On the other hand, in Miss Lilly's classroom, her students are not cooperative and very passive that she feels that the training did not prepare her for situations like this, She felt that her school is so different from other schools that the training did not meet up her expectations to help students in a school like hers:

“...don't know how to say lar...my students so difficult to open their mouth, so most of the time I'm the one speaking..., it's very difficult if students do not cooperate,..., so my lessons are teacher-centred most of the time where I explain and I guide them to complete the task given, at least they learn something there. The cascade course did not help me especially a school like mine...”

(Lilly, Interview 1, August 29, 2023)

Based on what was stated by Madam Tulips, Miss Cempaka and Miss Lilly, it can be seen that they have some sort of understanding on the student – centred learning strategies although they felt it was not covered during the cascade training. Despite Madam Tulips, Miss Cempaka and Miss Lilly claims to have issues with their understanding from the cascade training, it could be seen that the issues are not from the methodological aspects of the approaches but misunderstanding on the use of such approaches in a diversified classroom setting. It can also be identified in the guided reflections of their lessons:

“I gave them the reading task, I explained to them sometimes in Bahasa Malaysia too, depends on the level of the text. After that, I asked them the answers to know what they understood, they will then give me the answers, and we will discuss as class. I have interaction with my students, but I will be the centre person during the discussion to keep the class in control.”

(Tulips, Guided Reflection, October 5, 2023)

“for the speaking lesson, I normally do pair work, so for this lesson, the reading task, they read the article and after that they answered the

questions, I discussed the questions and then I moved to the speaking task where they did pair work.”

(Cempaka, Guided Reflection, August 28, 2023)

“I did group work with them and had to walk around the classroom to make sure they don’t discuss in their mother tongue. I had to stop one group to one group to make sure they understand what I exactly want them to do.”

(Lilly, Guided Reflection, September 04, 2023)

The teachers in general are using student-centred approaches although some teachers find it difficult and inconvenient. They still try these methodologies fulfilling the curriculum requirements. The methodologies practised by the teachers are also an evident of what is required in the curriculum and how the new curriculum is envisioned:

“a range of pedagogical approaches have been recommended as the most effective ways to engage learners in developing this skill set. These approaches include student-centred learning, active learning, project-based learning and inquiry-based learning.”

(Malaysian Education Blueprint 2015 - 2025, p.18)

In terms of methodological knowledge, the teachers are aware of the requirement to use various strategies in classroom, but due to lack of exposure and lack of support they may not be able to fully explore those strategies in their classroom approaches.

Madam Tulips, Miss Cempaka and Miss Lilly, despite expressing some reservations about student-centred approach and the use of methodologies due to the shortcomings in the cascade training, they still had some practices that are student-centred in their classroom although they expressed that they are comfortable with teacher-centred strategies.

On the other hand, Madam Mawar, Madam Jasmin, Mr. Adham and Mr. Lim are some of those who have gotten a clear understanding of the methodological requirements

when implementing the curriculum. They have been exploring various strategies that focus on developing the language skills and made it student-centred.

In summation, in terms of methodologies, teachers understand the need for using various methodologies in implementing the curriculum. Despite the challenges faced by some teachers, they still apply the student-centred approaches in their classroom practices in a very limited manner. It is important to take note on the context of the teachers' environment as well as the support that they have to carry out methodologies that are student-centred.

4.3.2.2 Use of Teaching Resources

The use of teaching resources to aid classroom practices is part of curriculum implementation. In order for the effective implementation of curriculum the right teaching resources is important in order for the process to take place effectively. To cater to the needs of diversified classroom teachers should be able to select the right resources, adapt and apply them effectively in their classroom teaching and learning which would further become their pedagogical acumen. These teaching resources act as a bridge between the pedagogical approaches and curriculum that the teacher is implementing in the classroom. The use of resources is also emphasised by the Ministry of Education:

“It is also important to use authentic materials, including online materials and materials adapted from various sources which enable independent learning beyond the classroom. These materials can complement the use of CEFR – aligned English language textbooks. The integrated use teaching resources can make a strong positive impact on language learning.”

(English Language Education Roadmap, 2015 – 2025, p.219)

Therefore, an exploration into how teacher resources are utilised can provide valuable insights into the mechanics of teaching and content delivery. It will show how teachers

interpret and enact the curriculum and by doing so it will also highlight the roles of teachers as the architects of learning experiences.

Embarking on the post-cascade training teaching strategies, teachers have employed various resources to connect their classroom lessons with effective outcomes. Mr. Adham, Madam Jasmin and Madam Mawar are among the teachers who go the extra mile to the get resources and extra learning materials for the teaching practices. Madam Jasmine creates her own teaching materials for her lessons, while Mr. Adham is so much into the use of boardgames. Whereas Madam Mawar likes to use articles and videos from the internet resource for her lessons. The teachers have different ways of finding and using resources for their lessons:

“...I try to get extra materials to support learning okay...okay sometimes I use games such as boardgames or even online educational games like paper quizzizz in classroom to get my students to be engaged...”
(Adham, Interview 1, September 20, 2023)

“...aaaaa...I create my own activities and worksheets. They would help my students to be more engaging in my lessons and it is more effective than the exercises in the textbook...and then...besides I also design my worksheets according to my students' proficiency level...”
(Jasmine, Interview 1, August 25, 2023)

“...I have been using articles and videos from the internet in my lessons... This is because the CEFR is all about using the language in a real settingkan... and I try to create that through my lesson...and.. they get to see real examples in their classroom practices...”
(Mawar, Interview 1, September 18, 2023)

Teachers like Mr. Adham, Madam Jasmine and Madam Mawar looks beyond the textbook and make language learning more meaningful by exploring, adapting and creating their own learning materials and resources to cater to their students learning in order to ensure the implementation of the curriculum is effective which is aligned with the Education Roadmap (2015 – 2020).

On the other spectrum of this aspect, despite the existence of various resources online and offline for CEFR-aligned curriculum, the use of textbook seemed to be more prevalent among teachers like Miss Lilly, Miss Cempaka and Madam Iris who are being over-reliance on textbook usage in their classrooms. There are similarities among all the three of them when using textbooks. They feel that the textbook is complete and enough for their lessons that it never occurred in their minds to look for more materials or create own materials. It is unfair to say that they do not use other resources, but their use of other resources seemed to be very limited and according to them :

“...I find the textbook is very useful and has a lot of activities so I don’t think so...I need to use other resources...but sometimes I will print worksheets from other books for students to practice...”

(Lilly, Interview 1, August 29, 2023)

“...students completed the activities in the textbook for them to understand the text better. They also completed the vocabulary practice in the textbook. I did not use extra resources for this lesson, as it is not needed. I think the textbook itself enough to cover the syllabus for the year...”

(Cempaka, Guided reflection, August 28, 2023)

“...I use only the textbook and also the workbook, that is enough, sometimes I use the practice book that we have bought for the English teachers to use...”

(Iris, Guided Reflection, October 13, 2023)

Madam Lilly, Miss Cempaka and Madam Iris are very contented with the textbook that they do not see a reason for them to use other resources or materials for their lessons. However, except for Madam Iris, Miss Cempaka, and Madam Lilly the other teachers in the study are using other resources but they are limited to worksheets. Table 5 shows the teaching resources that the teachers have cited in their lesson plans:

Table 5*Teaching Resources used by teachers in their lessons.*

Teachers	Teaching Resources
Cempaka	Textbook
Jasmine	Textbook, self-designed worksheets, other resources
Mawar	Textbook, creating own worksheets, other resources
Lilly	Textbook, worksheets from other sources
Adham	Textbook, paper quizzizz, other resources
Lim	Textbook, worksheets
Tulip	Textbook, worksheets, workbook
Iris	Textbook and workbook

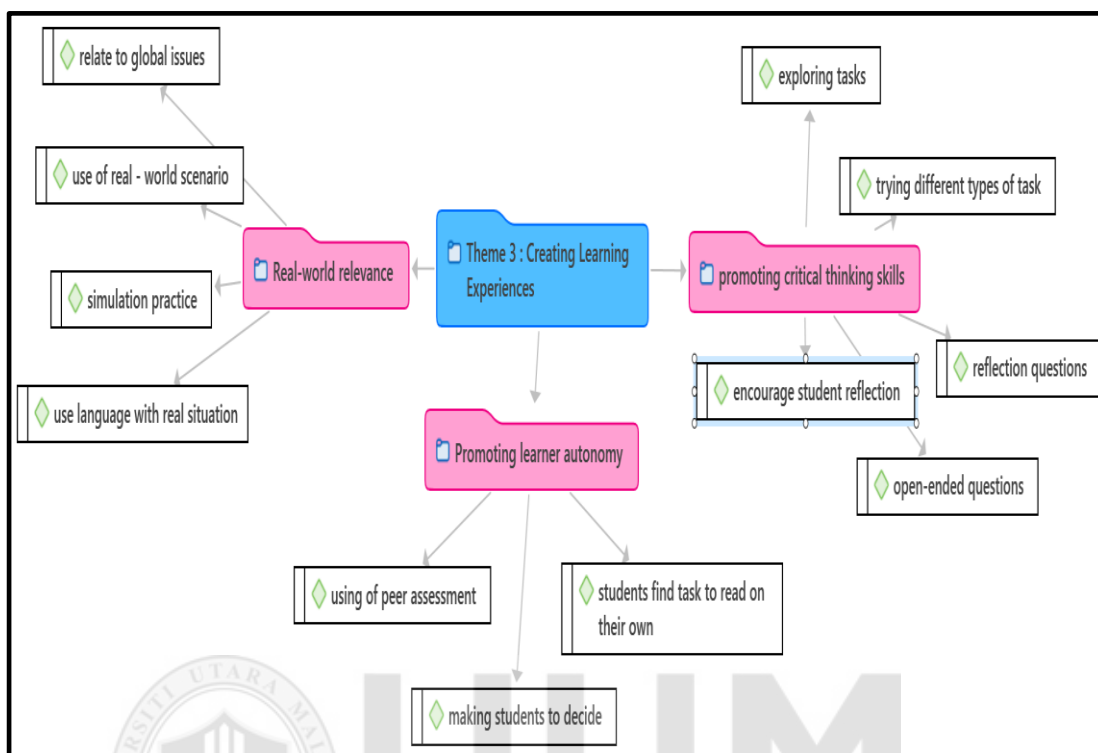
To summarise, in the process of curriculum implementation, while there is a move towards a more dynamic and varied use of resources among teachers, there are teachers who remained tethered to the use of textbook as they think the content of the textbook is sufficient for language learning.

4.3.3 Theme 3: Creating Learning Experiences

The theme ‘creating learning experiences explores the aspects of how learners are supported in their quest to acquire the English language through a meaningful and engaging learning experiences through three subthemes, which are promoting learner autonomy, promoting critical-thinking skills and real-world relevance.

Figure 19

Theme 3: Creating Learning Experiences



4.3.3.1 Promoting Learner Autonomy

Promoting learner autonomy is one of the essential parts of the implementation of the CEFR-aligned English language curriculum for secondary schools. Teachers implementing the curriculum are tasked to develop learners who take ownership of their own learning to become life long-learners:

“The CEFR-aligned curriculum is intended to encourage self-assessment and more independent and autonomous learners.”
(English Language Education Roadmap, 2015 – 2025, page 201)

Teachers Mr. Adham, Mr. Lim, Madam Mawar as well as Madam Jasmine are among teachers who had tried and explored the strategies that promote learner autonomy in their lessons post-cascade training. Madam Jasmine and Mr. Lim’s strategy to bring learner autonomy into their classroom is through making meaningful projects for

students to indulge in, whereas Madam Mawar prefers to use peer and self-assessment toolkits for her students:

“...one thing that I brought back to my classroom after the cascade training, is reducing my role in the classroom...uuhmmm...when I started group projects, students,... plan their roles and discuss and take decisions on their projects, this makes their learning more meaningful...”
(Lim, Interview 1, September 22, 2023)

“...after going for the cascade trainingkan, I started using the peer – assessment and self – assessment toolkits more often. Before this, I never use them, but after knowing how to use them, I use more often...”
(Mawar, Interview 1, September 18, 2023)

“...In the current syllabus, I have plenty of opportunities to implement project – based learning. When we are doing the topic hmmm... environment, students pick one issue from it and do a project in a small group. I usually make students to make decisions on what and how to do, this make them to take the ownership of their education...”
(Jasmine, Interview 1, August 25, 2023)

The teachers’ understanding and implementation of learner autonomy strategies gained through the cascade training is further strengthened through their classroom practices which they have further included in their guided reflections:

“...for this lesson I paired up the students, the good one will work with the weak one so that the weak one will get help and guidance from the good one...”
(Mawar, Guided reflection, September 21, 2023)

“pupils are required to carry out peer-assessment while doing the speaking task where each students will find a pair and they will assess each other while carrying out their speaking task. Both will assess each other based on the simple rubric I gave to them”
(Lim, Guided reflection, September 29, 2023)

“...for the reading task today, I asked students to bring articles related to the themes and these articles were exchanged and discussed in the groups...” (Jasmine, Guided reflection, September 04, 2023)

While Madam Mawar, Mr. Lim, Madam Jasmine and Mr. Adham has related about the inclusion of learner autonomy in classroom practices, there were no mention or

indication of learner autonomy strategies from the other teachers who were involved in this study.

4.3.3.2 Promoting Critical Thinking Skills

Promoting critical-thinking skills is another element in curriculum implementation that needs to be paid attention as the development of critical thinking skills has also been given the utmost importance when the CEFR-aligned curriculum was introduced:

“The curriculum should inculcate higher order thinking skills to prepare children for the future”
(English Language Education Roadmap, 2015 – 2025, p.123)

“There must be diversity in the way the curriculum is delivered and assessed in order to develop independent and reflective learning, as well as creative and critical thinking”
(English Language Education Roadmap, 2015 – 2025, p.293)

As we delve into this subtheme, we are unravelling the layers of understanding gained through cascade training by the teachers who have developed critical thinking skills through the implementation of the CEFR-aligned curriculum. A myriad of ways were picked by the teachers to develop the students’ critical thinking skills. One of it is the questioning skills. Mr. Lim, Madam Jasmine and Madam Iris often use open-ended questions in their lessons to develop critical thinking skills. Meanwhile, Mr. Adham goes beyond that and carries out project-based learning activities for his students to develop critical thinking skills. The following are some excerpts from the interview from Madam Iris, Mr. Adham, Mr. Lim and Madam Jasmine:

“...From the cascade training I have learnt to ask many questions that require them to think, in my classroom,....hrmmmm.... at first it was difficult as students were very difficult to respond to such questions, but as time goes, more students start to answer the questions I ask...”
(Lim, Interview 2, October 05, 2023)

“...to develop critical thinking skills, I will make students think and ponder through open – ended questions...”

(Jasmine, Interview 1, August 25, 2023)

“...okay as I said earlier project-based learning got a lot of elements that is highlighted in the CEFR-aligned curriculum... And...erh..creative and critical thinking skills is part of it okay... I carry out project-based learning at a very small scale...”

(Adham, Interview 2, October 03, 2023)

“...Sometimes I ask open-ended questions or sometimes I just ask them to reflect on the lesson or learnt and write in about 20 to 30 words, just to see how deeply they can get connected to the content of that lesson...”

(Iris, Interview 2, October 17, 2023)

Furthermore, Mr. Lim, Madam Jasmine, Mr Adham and Madam Iris have also elaborated about their practices of developing critical thinking skills in their respective guided reflections, where they shared their classroom practices from using HOTS questions in classroom, to organising debate and using podcast, the teachers had used a number of ways to develop higher order thinking skills:

“Students given HOTS questions which I modified from the textbook for them to think beyond the text and present in the classroom.”

(Lim, Guided reflection, September 29, 2023)

“for the speaking part I asked students to do a debate on can organising charity events create awareness among the general public? this was more fun and can help them thinking critically rather than just stating opinions.”

(Jasmine, Guided reflection, September 04, 2023)

“after we finish the listening task in textbook, we continue with another listening activity. I play a podcast on the roles of social media among the younger generation today. I ask students to listen and summarise the idea and also identify the speakers’ intention and implicit messages in the podcast...”

(Adham, Guided reflection, September 26, 2023)

“I asked open ended questions after discussing the activities with the students to further check how deep their understanding is.”

(Iris, Guided reflection, October 13, 2023)

The subtheme promoting critical thinking skills show that teachers have embraced the call for a more evaluative classroom approach where the development of critical thinking was evidently taking place, which could be seen in teachers' interviews and guided reflections.

4.3.3.3 Real-world Relevance

The subtheme of real-world relevance is a critical aspect of the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) where it upholds the advocacy for functional and practical approach for language learning. Real-world relevance is not an extra element in the curriculum but a fundamental aspect of teaching and learning. In fact, the CEFR framework proposed that the acquisition of English language should be based on real-world relevance:

"The idea is the curricula and courses should be based on real-world communicative needs, organised around real-life task and accompanied by "can do" descriptors that communicate aims to learners. "The methodological message of the CEFR is that language learning should be directed towards enabling learners to act in real-life situations, expressing themselves and accomplishing tasks of different natures."

(Council of Europe, 2020, p.29)

Therefore, it is important to look at how teachers have been informed about the CEFR standards on the real-world relevance through the cascade training that they had attended and how they developed learning experiences that is relevant to students' environment and for their future undertakings. The framework proposes learners to apply and practice language skills in authentic contexts, which is a mirror for the unpredictable and complex real-life communications.

The teachers who attended the cascade training, in their classroom practices have demonstrated activities related to the real-world by preparing tasks for students that

mirror real world communication. For example, role plays; attending a job interview, having appointment with doctor or simple acting out any situation in English that is close to our everyday situation are some activities that has been stated by the teachers. Madam Jasmine stated that, she had always designed activities related to real – world task:

“...sometimes I create an environment where I get my students to role-play a situation in a supermarket or in a clinic, uhmm.... just to get them to practice speaking...”

(Jasmine, Interview 2, September 07, 2023)

Whereas Mr. Adham, prefers to give students project work that requires them to go out and interact with people to get information:

“...okay I once asked my students to look for people in different professions such as doctors, lawyers, engineers and okay maybe teachers too.. and asked them to do interview with these people and then do a presentation to other students in the class....”

(Adham, Interview 2, October 03, 2023)

Similar to Madam Jasmine and Mr Adham, Madam Mawar also has carried out activities that are connecting students to practice the language for real world relevance:

“...I actually did one activity recently where I gave them situations like in classroom or family event or a family at home. They did role-play in groups to solving a conflict. I also give them time to prepare...”

(Mawar, Interview 1, September 18, 2023)

Despite the successful attempt of some teachers to bring language use for the real world into the classroom language practices some teachers are very reluctant due to various reasons:

“...I don't have enough time to think of other activities as the activities in the textbook takes so much time...”

(Lilly, Interview 2, September 06, 2023)

“...hmmm....my good students are okay, but it is difficult to get them to do this in weak class when they are struggling to speak simple sentences... they are shy, they won't take part and don't want to do the activities as said...they will just be quiet..”

(Tulips, Interview 2, October 11, 2023)

“...It is challenging for me to connect lessons with real-world relevance as my students are already struggling with exercises in textbook, but I try to make it easy for them by relating the ideas in textbook to something they can relate for them to understand better...”

(Cempaka, Interview 1, August 22, 2023)

Teachers who have included the real-world context in the curriculum have also stated it as part of their lessons in their guided reflection. Madam Mawar and Madam Jasmine have included activities that bring in real-world relevance in their guided reflection.

The excerpts of the guided reflection is shown below:

“After completing the listening task, I played a news video from CNN and made the students listen to it and try to understand the news. After they listened to the news, they should share the information they got to their group members.”

(Jasmine, Guided reflection, September 04, 2023)

“I asked students in group to prepare a monthly budget on his expenses for a young working adult in Ipoh who is earning RM2000.00 and present it to the class.”

(Mawar, Guided reflection, September 21, 2023)

In short, the subtheme real-world relevance has shown how much teachers have inculcated real-life situations within the realm of language learning for students to use the communicative aspects of the language in the real world. From the data obtained it could be seen that teachers have understood the idea of inculcating real-life situations in the lesson, but the implementation is varied. While some choose to embed it within the lesson, others are having problem with their teaching environment as well as struggling with proficiency of the students who are least motivated to try.

4.3.4 Theme 4 : Evaluating Learning

The theme ‘evaluating learning’ explores the way students understanding and progress in terms of language learning are measured through the course of teaching and learning process by the teacher:

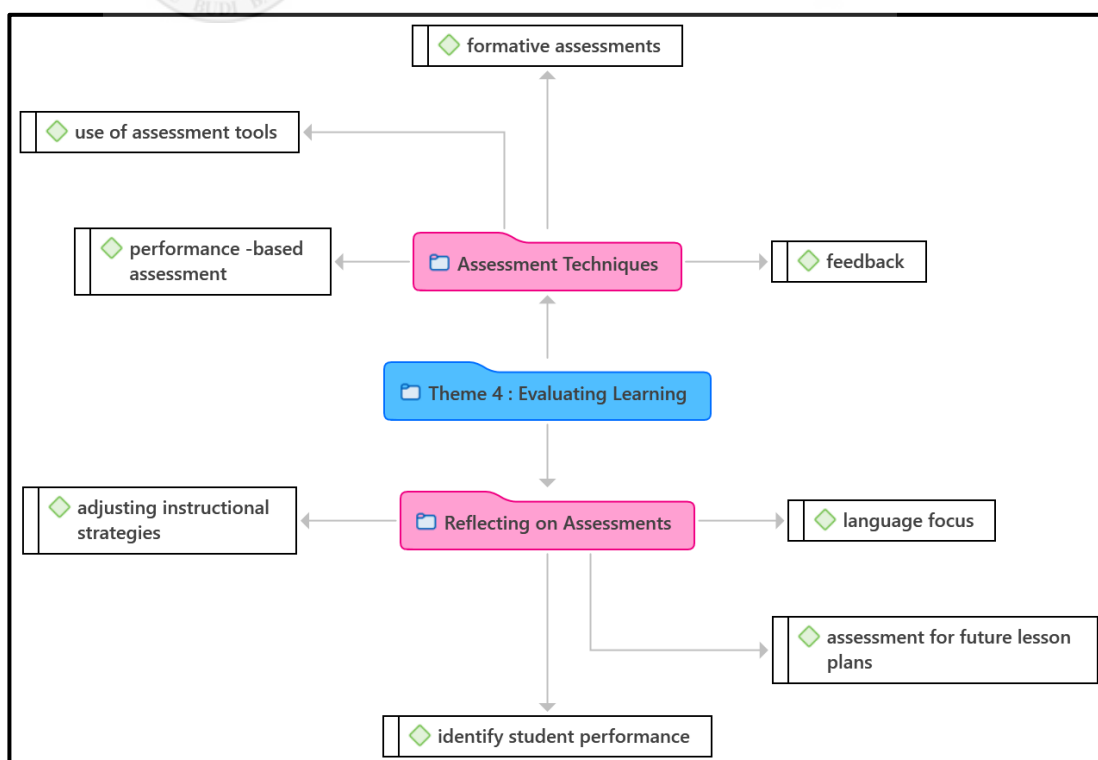
“It is important for teachers to be skilled in integrating assessment tasks into their lessons and in ensuring those tasks in the assessment tools are closely aligned to the learning outcomes to take advantage of tangible instructional payoffs”

(English Language Education Roadmap, 2015 – 2025, p.153)

As stated in the English language Education Roadmap, it is important for teachers to be able to carry out assessments in order to bring out the learning outcome. Therefore, teachers understanding of the curriculum in terms of aligning their teaching and learning practices with assessment is explored through two subthemes ‘assessment techniques’ and ‘reflecting assessments’ as shown in Figure 20

Figure 20

Theme 4: Evaluating Learning



4.3.4.1 Assessment Techniques

In terms of assessments, teachers have used a myriad of techniques in assessing their students' learning. Among techniques that were mentioned by the teachers during the interview were performance-based assessment, formative assessments, and peer assessments as ways to gauge progress of their students. This is in line with the expectations of the Ministry of Education that was outlined in the English language Education Roadmap 2015-2023:

“Teachers should use a variety of assessment techniques to evaluate student learning, including observation, questioning, and performance-based assessments.”

(English Language Education Roadmap, 2015-2025, p.165)

In line with the requirements of the roadmap, teachers have shared their assessment techniques and how they are related to developing the language skills that are focussed. Mr. Lim who was first apprehensive on carrying out continuous assessment became comfortable with the approach with practice:

“...at first, I felt less prepared to handle the continuous assessment aspect of the curriculum, as it required a change from the previous exam style assessment.....but then, ermm... with time and practice, I have become more comfortable with this approach...”

(Lim, Interview 1, September 22, 2023)

Furthermore, he also added that,

“...Assessment is done continuously, using formative methods, ermm...I provide regular feedback on students' work to track their progress and adjust my teaching approaches as needed... errrrmm... this help me ensure students are developing their English skills in line with the CEFR standards...”

(Lim, Interview 1, September 22, 2023)

Meanwhile Madam Jasmine has been practising both formative and summative assessments in her practice to keep her students' progress in check and she ensures that she evaluates their progress in their communicative competence:

“...also, when it comes to assessment, I try to align my evaluation methods with the CEFR framework, you know. I focus on assessing my students' communicative competence, and I use a combination of formative and summative assessments to check their progress in listening, speaking, reading, and writing skills...”

(Jasmine, Interview 1, August 25, 2023)

As for Madam Mawar the assessment techniques that she uses in her class are the use of board games and task-based learning activities as her formative assessment technique:

“...Post the training on the new curriculum, my classroom practices did not change much, but I tried some of the activities...such as using formative assessment board games to test students' understanding. I also tried the task-based learning activities in my lessons...”

(Mawar, Interview 1, September 18, 2023)

Teachers' understanding on the assessment techniques in their classroom practices is evident from the interview as they have been carrying out assessments in different ways. They also acknowledged that their assessment techniques were the result of attending the cascade training. Teachers understanding shown in their interviews were further confirmed in their classroom practices which was reflected in their guided reflections as shown below:

“I asked students to do a classroom presentation using the target language focussing on the appropriate use of cohesive devices, I observe and give feedback.”

(Mawar, Guided reflection, September 21, 2023)

“I check students understanding through the observation of their discussion, the presentation as well as their formative assessment. So here I use a multiple set of strategies, such as observational strategy and also worksheet to check students' understanding in terms of content and the language used.”

(Lim, Guided reflection, September 29, 2023)

“For the speaking part I used the peer – assessment rubric, gave it to the students, asked them to assess their partners use of language aspects like the grammar and vocabulary also the linkers they use.”

(Jasmine, Guided reflection, September 04, 2023)

Based on the teachers' interview and the guided reflections, it is evident that teachers like Madam Mawar, Mr. Lim and Madam Jasmine have the relevant understanding on classroom assessment and particularly have knowledge on formative assessment techniques that they are required to carry out in their classrooms.

However, despite there are being teachers who actually have shown understanding on assessment techniques used, teachers like Madam Cempaka and Madam Iris did not actually have a variety of methods for their assessments in classroom, instead their assessments were mostly completing the tasks in textbooks, or the workbooks given. They did not mention any other forms of assessments in their interview or guided reflections. They feel that completing exercises and tasks in the exercise books is sufficient as an assessment as how they stated in their interviews:

"...I normally assess my students with exercises in textbook, for example if textbook got practices after reading, that is what I take as their assessment. If all the questions they answer correctly, I can consider they have understood the text..."

(Cempaka, Interview 1, August 22, 2023)

"...Mostly exercises from workbook or textbook will help to decide whether the lesson achieved its objective, if they can answer the questions, it means they already mastered the skills..."

(Iris, Interview 2, October 17, 2023)

In their guided reflections, both Miss Cempaka and Madam Iris stated that the assessments that they provide for their students during the lessons were practice exercises from the textbook, which confirms what they have stated in their interview.

This is also a picture which shows their over-reliance towards textbook:

"students complete activity on page 85 in the textbook after completing the reading part and then we discuss the answers."

(Cempaka, Guided reflection, August 28, 2023)

“I gave them exercises from the textbook for them to answer and then we continue with similar exercises in the workbook.”
(Iris, Guided reflection, October 13, 2023)

It is noticed that Madam Cempaka and Madam Iris heavily rely on textbooks whenever they conduct formative assessments in their classrooms. Whereas Madam Mawar, Mr. Lim and Madam Jasmine are contrasting in their practise in assessments as they carry out formative assessments which are more focussed on the skills that they intend to develop among their students.

4.3.4.2 Reflecting on Assessments

The subtheme ‘reflecting on assessments’ explores how teachers have understood the process of reflecting on the lesson done and planning for the next lesson based on the assessments that were carried out. This process is not about teaching method alone but finding alignment in improvising instruction for better student understanding. Teachers, Mr. Adham, Madam Cempaka, Madam Tulips and Madam Mawar were the only teachers who had actually talked about reflecting on their classroom assessments after lesson and before planning for the lesson or the next lesson. Mr. Adham, rethinks on the things that happened in his classroom and would make changes or improvise his next lesson to make it better:

“...okay when planning for the lesson, I always think back what happened in my lesson before this and the activities for the next lesson. This was one input given during the cascade. I will adjust based on what they can do in the previous lesson, if there are anything I feel need to change I will change...”
(Adham, Interview 2, October 03, 2023)

Miss Cempaka, revisits on the things that her students are unable to do and works on include it in the next lesson so that students will improve the knowledge or understanding of the skill that she tries to impart:

“....aaaah.....I will see first....., if the day before they can't do the work I give, I try make it easy for them to do the work again in the next lesson or something things I will repeat in the next lesson, when in the lesson before they can't do it especially the grammar part...”

(Cempaka, Interview 2, September 05, 2023)

Whereby, Madam Tulips, provided an example of her reflective practices on how she would repeat certain things just to enable her students to do better in her lessons:

“...I see if they are unable to use the cohesive devices properly,...I will repeat it again in the next lesson so that they know how to do it correctly...”

(Tulips, Interview 2, October 11, 2023)

Besides interviews, the teachers' understanding on the reflecting on assessments could also be seen in their lessons through the guided reflections that they have written. Mr. Adham, Miss Cempaka and Madam Tulips in one way or another relate their activities, lesson plans and tasks that they assign to their students to what previously happened in their classrooms. This is a sign of their reflective practices in their classroom assessments:

“I design this lesson, by also looking into their previous understanding of the lesson.”

(Adham, Guided reflection, September 26, 2023)

“this exercise is actually something I already give in the last lesson but I add again to further improve their understanding.”

(Cempaka, Guided reflection, August 28, 2023)

“In previous lesson I feel that they didn't understand the use of linkers properly so I tried to put that part in the lesson again as repeat and practice, so that they can improve what they understand.”

(Tulips, Guided reflection, October 5, 2023)

Mr. Adham, Madam Cempaka and Madam Tulips were the only ones who actually discussed and implemented the reflections on assessments and coordinate their lessons to fit in students understanding of the complexity of the lesson and what students can do and cannot do. The other participants of the study did not mention or write anything

related to these themes although this subtheme is also important as it is part of the CEFR-aligned curriculum:

“Teachers can also use formative assessment to reflect on their own teaching practices and make adjustments as needed.”

(Council of Europe, 2020, p. 28)

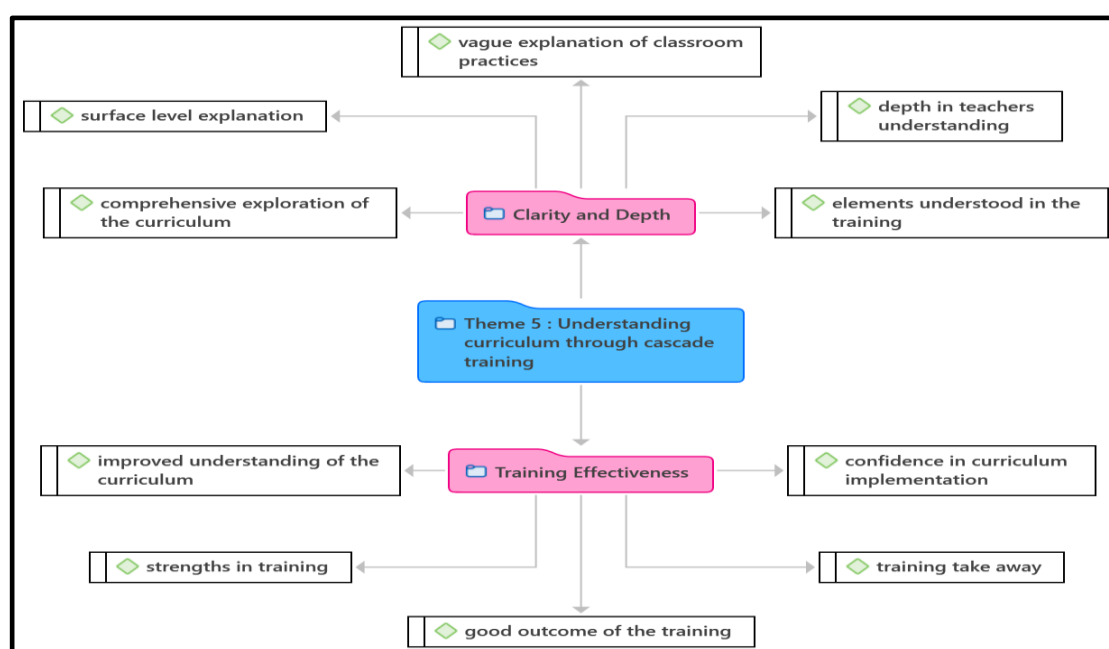
The subtheme reflecting assessment could be seen being carried out by some of the teachers who were involved in the study, though it is not found entirely in all the participants and the lessons.

4.3.5 Theme 5 : Understanding of Curriculum Through Cascade Training

The theme ‘understanding of curriculum through cascade training’ explores on how teachers have understood the curriculum through the training and how much it helps them to understand the strategies to implement the curriculum. To explore the theme more in detail, it has been put into two subthemes. They are ‘clarity and depth’ and ‘training effectiveness’ as shown in Figure 21.

Figure 21

Theme 5: Understanding of the curriculum through cascade training



4.3.5.1 Clarity and Depth

The subtheme ‘clarity and depth’ is important to look in the intricacies of the understanding that the teachers have on the CEFR-aligned curriculum through the cascade training. Through this subtheme we are going to explore how teachers are painting a picture of their understanding through the interview as well as their guided reflection on the role of cascade training in helping them to implement the curriculum in their classrooms. In continuing the analysis of clarity and depth, the experiences narrated by Madam Mawar, Madam Jasmin, and Mr. Lim show their understanding of the curriculum which can be said between robust and fragile was evidenced in their interviews. Firstly, Mr. Lim stated that in general he understands the CEFR-aligned curriculum and its framework, which is shown in the following excerpt:

“...ermmm...during the training, we, discussed the various levels of language proficiency, from A1 to C2, and how they are related to the KSSM Curriculum...ermmmmm.... We also explored different teaching strategies, assessment methods, and tools for, supporting students in achieving their language goals. The courses stressed on the importance of creating a supportive and engaging learning environment...”
(Lim, Interview 1, September 22, 2023)

He also further explained in detail on his understanding of the curriculum by adding the following details which reflects how he had construed the curriculum:

“...ermmm after going for the cascade course...ermmm I now emphasis more on communication skills and real-life situations.....ermmm...it has encouraged me to create a more interactive and supportive learning environment....annnd also, I now use continuous assessment to track students' progress,...”
(Lim, Interview 2, October 5, 2023)

Mr. Lim’s explanation on the understanding of the curriculum through the cascade training was also manifested in his classroom practices which he explained in the guided reflection of his lesson. A few excerpts of his lesson show his clarity on the implementation of the curriculum:

Excerpt 1

“The learning standard requires to use a range of reading strategies, and here I employ a strategy that students do in a group, as they read in a group, and discuss the understanding of the text is extended and they could actually grasp more ideas from their peers. This helps to achieve the learning objective of the lesson.”

(Lim, Guided reflection, September 29, 2023)

Excerpt 2

“check students understanding through the observation of their discussion, the presentation as well as their formative assessment. So here I use a multiple set of strategies, such as observational strategy and also worksheet to check students understanding, I also use observation to evaluate their speaking skills during the lesson.”

(Lim, Guided reflection, September 29, 2023)

Excerpt 3

“The students are in form 5, and they are considered upper intermediate level. The learning experience here are appropriate for the level of the students. As the topic given is something that they can connect to their lives, language used in the text are familiar, with introduction of new structures and vocabulary to learn, students given HOTs question to think beyond the text and present in the classroom.”

(Lim, Guided reflection, September 29, 2023)

The three excerpts above, are some of the snippets of Mr. Lim's lesson and we could see how Mr. Lim's lesson are aligned with the requirements of the CEFR-aligned curriculum with student-centred being the central focal of the lesson, opportunity for students to explore and learn with appropriate language level and language development as the focus of the lesson. Mr. Lim's explanation on his gains from the cascade training and the guided reflection of his lesson show that Mr. Lim has his understanding of the curriculum and his classroom practices well-coordinated.

Next, Madam Mawar has also explained what she gained from the cascade training in her own words. The following is what she explained about her understanding of the curriculum through the cascade training:

“...what I understand from the training is, the lessons are carried out in a cycle where in each cycle teachers need to cover all the four skills which are the writing, listening, reading and speaking skills along with that...kan?, I also have to teach grammar which is called language awareness and literature in action. I also understand that...errrr, my lessons need to focus on active learning and should encourage students to do rather than being passive learners. And to do that I have to use several strategies.....Oh I remember now, some of this strategies were also covered during the training sessions. I also understand formative assessment and PBD plays important roles in carrying out the lesson...”

(Mawar, Interview 1, September 18, 2023)

Madam Mawar, from the Cascade training gained the general understanding of the CEFR-aligned curriculum. She has stated the general things that she is expected to do when implementing a curriculum. In her classroom, Madam Mawar, displays her understanding of the curriculum through her practice where she designs the lesson activities to achieve the learning objectives as shown in her statement below:

“...If I walk into the class with the ideas of what I want to teach, and thenkan.... having specific learning objective which I built based on the learning standards in the SOW and textbooks, with good teaching strategies like think-pair-share to elicit the language from students and...ermmm my students are able to show what they have learnt when I carry out formative assessments in between or at the end of the lesson, this is my proof of my ability to implement the curriculum in the classroom...”

(Mawar, Interview 1, September 18, 2023)

Madam Mawar's depth of understanding of the curriculum is also seen in the guided reflection where she detailed about the lesson that she had carried out. A few excerpts from her lesson show her the clarity and the depth of her understanding of how she needs to implement the curriculum:

Excerpt 1

“I used students-discussion session and drawing of mind maps of the advantages and disadvantages of teamsports. Students work in groups to draft the essay as they discuss and verbalise the paragraphs first. Also group presentations help students to speak using proper cohesive devices. To achieve the learning objectives students need to write using proper cohesive devices to link the ideas to one another.”

(Mawar, Guided reflection, September 21, 2023)

Excerpt 2

"I designed the supplementary materials for the lesson on my own to actually help pupils to understand different uses of cohesive devices and how to use them while forming different types of sentences. The materials actually helped pupils to use the cohesive devices very effectively as the task given in the textbook was not sufficient."

(Mawar, Guided reflection, September 21, 2023)

Excerpt 3

"Students learn by doing it where they demonstrate the use of cohesive devices in communication when they do classroom presentation, besides during group discussion unknowingly they actually develop the target language skills required in the lesson."

(Mawar, Guided reflection, September 21, 2023)

From the lesson clips above, it could be seen Madam Mawar's lesson shows the clarity she has in implementing the curriculum. Her lessons were student-centred, and she is very clear on what are the aspects of language she wants the students to achieve in a student-centred approach within the boundaries of the curriculum.

Next, Madam Jasmine's clarity and depth of her understanding of the curriculum through the cascade training is displayed in the interview. Madam Jasmine understands the student-centred and communicative competence as the elements in the CEFR-aligned English language curriculum. The following is what explained by Madam Jasmine:

"...from the training, I understand that the CEFR-aligned curriculum, has alignment with CEFR proficiency levels, then focuses on communicative competence and.... and encourages a student-centred approach...ermmm... it also integrate the four skills, use real life situations to practice the language..."

(Jasmine, Interview 1, August 25, 2023)

Madam Jasmine further explained extensively on her understanding of the curriculum on the importance of developing language skills for real-world use by saying the following:

“...ermmmm one concept that I learned in the cascade training was the importance of providing opportunities for students to practice the language skills in real-world situations, you know and....to apply this concept in my classroom, I use activities that are like real-life situations, such as role-plays, debates, and group discussions....and these activities help my students to improve...”

(Jasmine, Interview I, August 25, 2023)

In her guided reflection, she further gives clarification on the depth and clarity that she has on the understanding of the curriculum:

Excerpt 1

“The strategies I used to achieve the learning objectives were the group reading and discussion of selected texts. Then I did pair work to practice speaking and sharing opinions on familiar topics. I also had guided questioning to help students extract main points from extended texts. To further develop their language skills, I do debate or role-plays.”

(Jasmine, Guided reflection, September 04, 2023)

Excerpt 2

“I encouraged students to engage with the texts and apply reading strategies to construct meaning. Also provided opportunities for students to practice speaking and express themselves on the topic given. Through the task given, I also guided students in developing their comprehension skills for extended texts. Also I make sure to develop critical thinking and communication skills, as students had to articulate and defend their point of views in the lesson.”

(Jasmine, Guided reflection, September 04, 2023)

Excerpt 3

“As the lesson progresses, I monitored students’ during group and pair work and observed their engagement and understanding of the texts I also listened to students’ discussions and assessed their ability to communicate ideas and opinions on familiar topics besides having their peers to assess and give feedback to them.”

(Jasmine, Guided reflection, September 04, 2023)

Madam Jasmine’s involvement with the curriculum, as enlightened by her interview and guided reflection, reveals her high-level clarity and depth in her understanding of the curriculum. The communicative activities and formative assessment strategies shows how she successfully translated the principles gained in the cascade training into effective classroom practice. The learner-centredness and integration of real-

world contexts not only align with the objectives set by the curriculum but also enable in building students' communicative competence. We encounter a greater spectrum of understanding among Madam Mawar, Madam Jasmine and Mr. Lim. While these teachers show a good level of clarity and depth in their understanding of the curriculum through cascade training, teachers like Miss Lilly, Madam Iris and Madam Tulips display varying range of clarity. Interview with them show a complex journey of cascade training where the clarity and understanding of the curriculum are grasped with differing level of adeptness.

Firstly, Miss Lilly's grasp of the curriculum seems to be having foundational understanding despite having attended the cascade training. Her classroom approach firmly rooted in her dependency in textbooks and a very rigid classroom practice. The following is some of the interview excerpts on her clarity and depth of understanding of the curriculum:

"...ermmm...from the training of the CEFR curriculum I understand that the lessons should be conducted based on the SOW and using the textbooks. and then...lessons should focus on student-centred learning and should be focussing on all the four main skills...ermmm... I think these are the aspects that I understand in the training..."

(Lilly, Interview 1, August 29, 2023)

While in the above extract Miss Lilly has explained on the understanding of the curriculum that she gained through the cascade which reflects how she has comprehended the curriculum. She further added details saying the following:

"...If I can teach using the textbook and my students understand what I teach... then I think I have understood the curriculum well... I also always include pair – work in my classroom activity....and then..., I think the textbook exercises we will do together ..."

(Lilly, Interview 1, August 29, 2023)

Miss Lilly further added on her classroom lesson on students' understanding as what she stated below:

“...I see my lesson as successful if my students can do the work that I have given, and then complete the work correctly...ermm... that means they understand the work given and achieved the language skill they should achieve...” (Lilly, Interview 1, August 29, 2023)

Miss Lilly’s guided reflection on her lesson gives a further clarification on the depth and clarity that she has on understanding the curriculum:

Excerpt 1

“for this lesson, for writing I ask students to write in a group in mahjong paper, also I gave the topic before and I gave them speaking chips to do pair work for the speaking skills.”

(Lilly, Guided reflection, September 04, 2023)

Excerpt 2

“The lesson focus was the writing part, where students develop their writing in groups and later ask their peers to check their essays. Throughout the lesson, I focussed on the tenet of writing. As for the speaking the lesson I also included speaking activities before the writing starts where pupils speak in pairs to discuss charity and taking part in charity events.”

(Lilly, Guided reflection, September 04, 2023)

From the interview and guided reflection, Miss Lilly’s foundational understanding through the cascade training is reflected in her approach towards the CEFR-aligned curriculum. While she understands the importance of student-centred learning and the integration of the skills, her reliance on textbook and her view on successful comprehension which she equated to correct completion of the tasks suggested a more conservative approach towards the curriculum. Although she incorporated strategies like pair-work, her methods of teaching reflected her preference for familiarity and structure over communicative and exploratory emphasis of the CEFR. Miss Lilly had attempted towards aligning her lessons towards CEFR framework, but there are rooms for the expansion of her pedagogical skills to embrace the depth of the framework. Continuing from Miss Lilly’s understanding of the CEFR-aligned curriculum to Madam Iris who had also had a fundamental grasp of clarity and depth of the curriculum in the cascade training.

Just like Miss Lilly, Madam Iris is also very reliable on textbook activities. However, her application towards teaching is broader. The following is her excerpts from the interviews with Madam Iris:

“...Personally, for me, from the training what I understand hmmm.... from the implementation, we are trying to help the students to master the four skills... and based on the criteria....hmmm like C1, C2, B1, B2, based on that, we have more clear guide on how to teach the students and how to guide them to reach this certain level of A1, A2, B1, B2 and so on... So for me, this implementation of the CEFR - aligned curriculum, it will help the students to become adaptive to the work environment or maybe in the future...”

(Iris, Interview 1, September 29, 2023)

Based on the explanation of her understanding of the curriculum, she further added on how she carries out her lessons:

“...For my lesson, I always use the textbook because in the training I understand that the textbook activities are already in the SOW so it is easy for us and with that I can cover all that necessary in the syllabus.... I also adapt activities like pair work...group discussions and so on...I then I will explain to them more so that they can understand the content of the lesson better...”

(Iris, Interview 1, September 29, 2023)

Madam Iris' understanding of the curriculum implementation from the cascade training can further be seen in the guided reflections of her lesson:

Excerpt 1

“For this lesson, I introduced a reading task from the textbook, I asked the students to silently read the text. The goal of the lesson was to have them familiarise with the topic and content and to activate their prior knowledge on the evolution of phones”.

(Iris, Guided reflection, October 13, 2023)

Excerpt 2

“After the reading part, I asked several questions and used the ice – cream sticks to pick names randomly to answer the questions, to check what they have understood on text. Students then completed the comprehension questions in the textbook. This was to test how much they have understood the text.”

(Iris, Guided reflection, October 13, 2023)

Excerpt 3

“After the comprehension task, students did the writing task, they had to summarise the text on their own. This was to practice writing skills.”

(Iris, Guided reflection, October 13, 2023)

Madam Iris’ clarity and depth of understanding towards implementation of the curriculum through cascaded training is similar to Ms. Lilly. She displays a foundational understanding of the curriculum which is reflected through her interview and guided reflections. Her classroom approach predominantly remains textbook-centric with mild exploration towards broader teaching methods. Although she demonstrated clarity in the focus of the curriculum towards the main language skills and students’ progression through the CEFR levels, her application of all these confined to the activities within the textbook. She also acknowledged the importance of skill-based learning and adapting to real-world situations in lessons but her classroom practices did not relate what she had stated, which may suggest that Madam Iris’ journey in understanding the curriculum is still far from the curriculum’s comprehensive approach.

Moving on further into the exploration of the subtheme clarity and depth, we are to look at Madam Tulips. In examining Madam Tulips engagement in curriculum implementation the clarity and depth of her understanding towards the curriculum implementation is evolving. The following is how she has narrated her understanding of the curriculum through the cascade training:

“...alright, most helpful in the CEFR training was, I think, listening and speaking skills, it is well planned in the SOW because all this while we teachers usually take things for granted where we don't really carry out in our classroom teaching.... So, when this CEFR system is out, I think it is a good thing whereby we complete the student with all the four skills...”

(Tulips, Interview 1, September 27, 2023)

Madam Tulips further explains how the training has helped her in her classroom practices:

“...Okay, implementing the curriculum in the classroom is definitely an effective way because it's clearly given what we're supposed to do and I think the activities suggested from the training are also quite friendly to our students. Alright, basically we have all students were given a really good textbook whereby the content in the textbook is actually related... I mean ya. So, basically, I use most of the activities in the textbook to carry out in my classroom, especially when it comes to listening and speaking...”

(Tulips, Interview 1, September 27, 2023)

Madam Tulips explanation on her understanding of the curriculum was rather superficial and she did not go in deep in explaining how she has perceived the implementation part. However, the gist of the understanding that was shared reflects what she has gained from the curriculum. Perhaps excerpts from her guided reflections on the lesson she carried out could lead us the clarity and depth of her understanding:

Excerpt 1

This lesson is part of the listening and speaking component of the English language curriculum. The language level used in this task is at B1 mid which is in accordance to the textbook. The listening and speaking skill designed for this lesson are at intermediate level, that suits my students' language proficiency. My students can handle the tasks and it is not too challenging and too easy as well.

(Tulips, Guided reflection, October 05, 2023)

Excerpt 2

I highlighted some phrase / idioms that contain in the listening audio and discuss the meaning first so that the students understand the listening audio better when they encounter those phrases. The exercises provided a structure for the lesson and allowed me to cover the necessary content. The speaking task allows students to develop their higher order thinking skills. I evaluate whether the objectives were achieved based on the responses that the students give in tasks given as well as in the discussion.

(Tulips, Guided reflection, October 05, 2023)

Excerpt 3

The content of the lesson is based on the textbook provided by the school and is supposed to cover the chapter on listening and speaking. Yes, the content of the lesson is connected to the learning objectives. I did not use any supplementary materials as the textbook provided by the school was sufficient for the lesson.

(Tulips, Guided reflection, October 05, 2023)

The understanding gained by Madam Tulips on curriculum implementation through the cascade training is revealed through the interviews and guided reflections. She displayed a fundamental level of clarity and evolving depth. Although Madam Tulips is convinced that the curriculum could be a provider to the development of English language, the reflections indicated that she is reliable to textbook and very cautious in her approach. She tries to inculcate higher order thinking skills and student-centred learning in her lesson, but it seems to be vague and requires deeper understanding to approach the strategies.

Through the subtheme of 'clarity and depth' in understanding the curriculum through the cascade training revealed that teachers display of varies spectrum of understanding. While Mr. Lim, Madam Mawar and Madam Jasmine displayed a more in-depth and nuanced understanding, where they effectively integrate teaching strategies which are required in the CEFR-aligned curriculum, Miss Lilly, Madam Iris and Madam Tulips displayed a more fundamental understanding of the curriculum where their practices are more textbook-driven and basic understanding of classroom strategies in developing the language. The variance displayed by the teachers show a diversified landscape of curriculum interpretation and application which ranges from dynamic and rich engagement to a more basic and structured compliance.

4.3.5.2 Training Effectiveness

Through the subtheme ‘training effectiveness’ we scrutinise on the way the training was carried out that impacted or affected teachers’ understanding of the curriculum. This subtheme is the crucible in which the efficacy of cascade training is scrutinised and measured. It looks into the aspects of whether teachers were provided with an actionable and robust understanding of the curriculum and whether the way the training was conducted provided them with the essential tools and confidence for effective implementation of the curriculum for an effective delivery of the curriculum. This was also emphasised in the English language Education Roadmap:

“What teachers need is not low-level training but high-level education. Teachers are not to be trained to do a job, and they need education to perform as professionals.”

(English Language Education Roadmap, 2015 – 2025, p.31)

Therefore, it is important to assess through the lenses of the teachers as to whether the cascade training has been successful in its quest to make teachers understand the curriculum for the classroom implementation and also to look at the existing gaps in the training that could be helpful for continual growth and support for professional developments in the future. Madam Mawar, Madam Jasmine and Madam Cempaka felt that the training was not comprehensive enough to provide them with the sufficient knowledge needed to understand and implement the curriculum:

“...Well...erm.... I learned some basic things, but I think I needed more in-depth information, practical guidance, and hands-on practice, you know...” (Jasmine, Interview 2, September 07, 2023)

“...So ya, the training sessions.....aaah... they didn't really help me much in understanding the curriculum,...eerh...it was all just a lot of theory and concepts that were hard for me to understand...”
(Cempaka, Interview 2, September 05, 2023)

“...the strategies were very limited for a three days course ya. So, yes some of the strategies introduced was helpful for us to use when we teach at school, but over the time we get bored and no further support to develop new ideas...” (Mawar, Interview 1, September 18, 2023)

The teachers also felt that the training was also too basic to enable them to implement the CEFR-aligned curriculum:

“...the training covered basics like the CEFR framework, proficiency levels, and the KSSM syllabus and it’s not sufficient for me to create lessons with just that...” (Jasmine, Interview 1, August 25, 2023)

“...The training sessions were quite limited in their scope...” (Cempaka, Interview 1, August 22, 2023)

“...the training was done in a rush, so when it was done as such, many things are left uncovered or covered in a touch and go manner, leaving teachers to be puzzled...” (Mawar, Interview 1, September 18, 2023)

Despite the grouses and unhappiness, they had on the training the following was what the teachers said:

“...the courses did provide me with a good overview of the CEFR framework and its objectives...erm...they also introduced me to some strategies and approaches for teaching English in a more communicative and student-centred way. So, in that case, the training was helpful, you know...” (Jasmine, Interview 1, August 25, 2023)

“...erh..I gain a better understanding of the overall structure and goals of the CEFR-aligned curriculum, which helped me to better align my teaching with the curriculum, you know. Also...the course did provide some tips on teaching English language skills, like how to create an engaging classroom environment, and I think it was helpful in my teaching practice...” (Cempaka, Interview 1, August 22, 2023)

“...I think I fairly understand what was expected from me in classroomla.. although I only understood many things at later, when I started exploring things myself...” (Mawar, Interview 1, September 18, 2023)

Although Madam Jasmine, Madam Cempaka and Madam Mawar pointed out on some of the shortcomings in the cascade training, they admitted that it was helpful in making them to take the first step to understand and implement the curriculum.

On the other hand, Mr. Adham, Mr. Lim, Ms. Lilly and Madam Tulips find the cascade training to be very effective and helpful in getting them understanding the curriculum better. As Mr. Lim narrated, the training provided him helpful insights to understand the curriculum. He also likes the strategies for classroom practices shared during the training. Like Mr. Lim, Ms. Lilly and Mr. Adham, also had similar experiences during the cascade training where they found the trainers were accommodating and helpful enough to help the understand the curriculum. Just like the others Madam Tulips experience during the training was also filled with roses, she shared the joys that she gained during the cascade training where she enjoyed doing all the activities provided to them. Their explanations are as shown below:

“...ermm...In the cascade training sessions that I attended, I found the teaching strategies and assessment methods most helpful in understanding the curriculum, as they provided guide to be used in my classroom...”
(Lim, Interview 1, September 22, 2023)

“...I think everything about the training was very good. The trainers were helpful...hurmm...they tried the best to cover everything in the training. The trainers helped us to understand the syllabus, the SOW and also how to use them with the textbooks...”
(Lilly, Interview 1, August 29, 2023)

“...okay when I went for the training, I still had things that I did not understand, but as I went through the courses, I think many of the questions that was in my mind were answered at that time. Okay,...and I also had trainers during the CEFR courses, who manage to answer the question that the participants ask them....Okay, so I think the training was very helpful in making me understand the curriculum...”
(Adham, Interview 1, September 20, 2023)

“...Alright during the CEFR courses we were divided into groups and we have to do some activities...aaa...like...aa... we have to plan lesson plan in groups according to all the four skills and decide activities and actually I enjoyed the course as I learnt a lot of new things and...ermm... it also helped me a lot in my lessons...”

(Tulips, Interview 1, September 27, 2023)

In summation, divided opinions have been yielded in the effectiveness of the cascade training. While Madam Jasmine, Madam Mawar and Madam Cempaka voiced out for the need for more comprehensive training approaches that should go beyond theoretical explanations, they also accept the fact that the cascade training had laid the foundation for them to know and understand the CEFR-aligned curriculum. On the other hand, teachers like Madam Tulips, Mr. Lim, Ms. Lilly and Mr. Adham narrated a different picture on the effectiveness of the cascade training being something helpful, impactful and comprehensive which helped them in enhancing their teaching practices. Teachers' divided opinions on the effectiveness of the cascade training show for the necessity for ongoing professional development to provide support to the diverse needs of the teachers.

In synthesising around the theme ‘understanding of the curriculum through the cascade training, it is evident that the impact of the training is multifaceted. At one spectrum of the theme, we could see teachers who have understood the curriculum reasonably well through the cascade training. At another spectrum the understanding is at foundational level.

4.4 Research Question 2: To What Extent has the Cascade Training Helped Teachers in the Implementation of Their Lessons?

Delving into the efficiency of the cascade training in helping teachers in the implementation of their lessons, this part of the study explores the extent to which the cascade training has prepared teachers to implement their lessons. To explore this research question, it is important to look into every aspect of the training that was conducted. Hence, this part has been put into four themes namely, ‘efficacy of cascade training’, ‘teacher growth and development’, ‘teacher-centredness’ and ‘exam-oriented practices’. By evaluating these themes, the inquiry seeks to uncover the true measure of the impact that the cascade training has on teachers in terms of implementing the CEFR-aligned English language curriculum and the adaptive journey that the teachers are navigating within it. Figure 22 is the diagramme that shows the formation of all the themes through the codes and subthemes that led to the 4 themes that provide answers to the aforementioned research question.

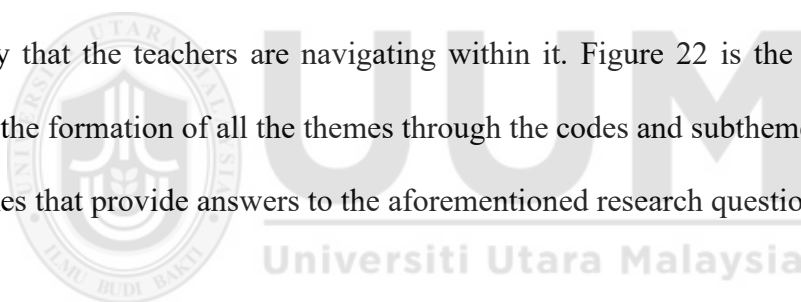
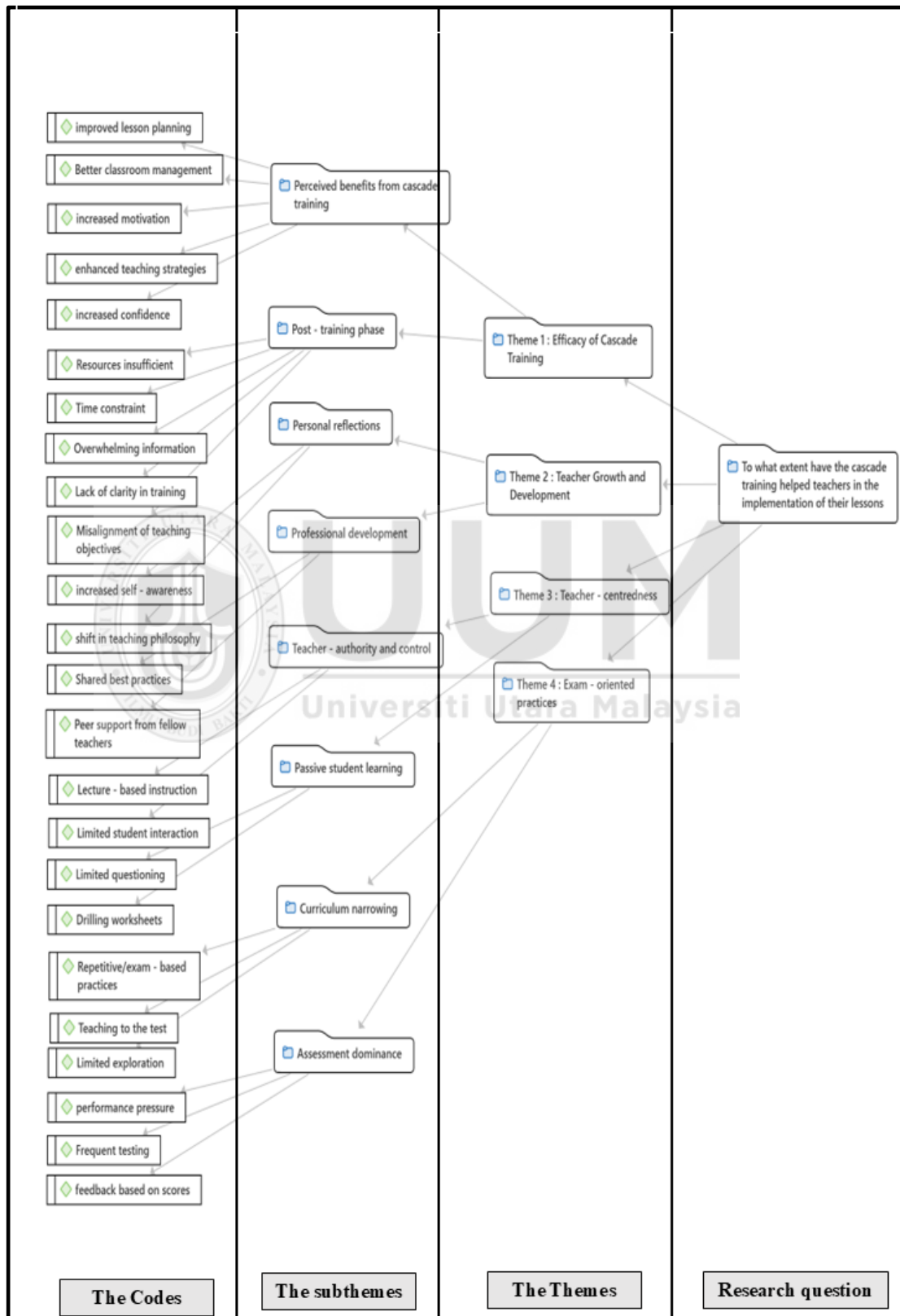


Figure 22

Thematic analysis for the extent of cascade training helping teachers in the implementation of their lessons.

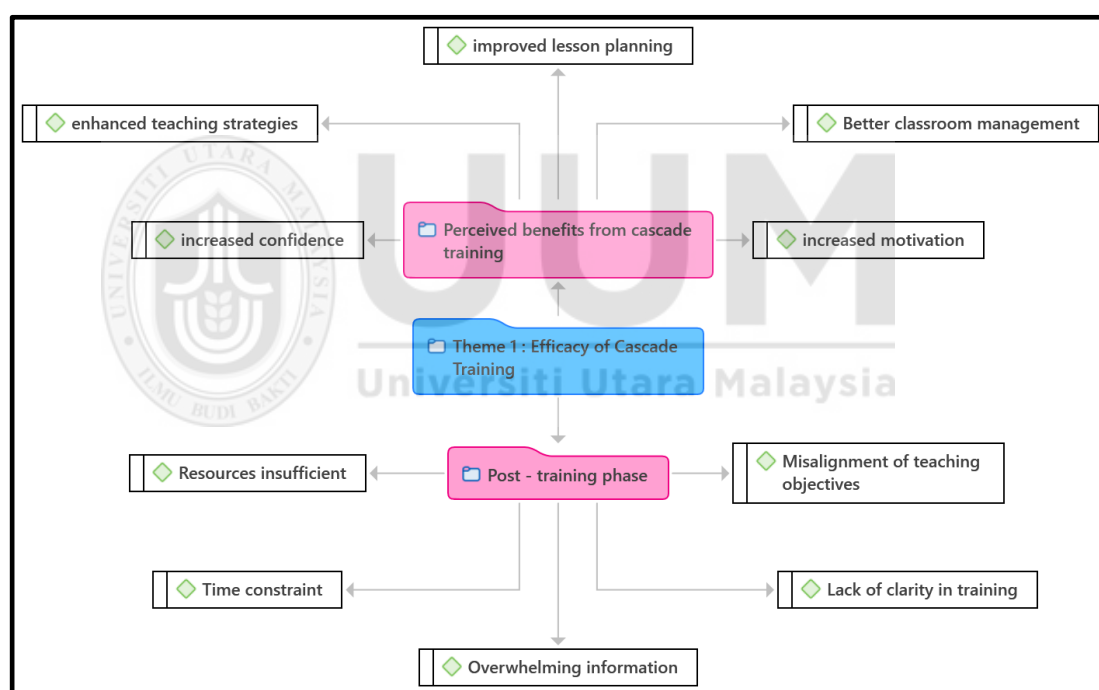


4.4.1 Theme 1: Efficacy of Cascade Training

The theme ‘efficacy of cascade training’ comprises the critical evaluation of the cascade training model that was used to disseminate training on the CEFR-aligned curriculum among teachers to empower them with the necessary knowledge and skills for the successful implementation of the curriculum. The theme probes the real and tangible impacts of the training through the subthemes ‘perceived benefits from cascade training’ and ‘post-training phase’ as shown in Figure 23.

Figure 23

Theme 1: Efficacy of cascade training



4.4.1.1. Perceived Benefits From the Cascade Training

The cascade trainings played a great role in enlightening teachers about the CEFR-aligned English language curriculum. Teachers’ opinions whether the teachers have benefitted from the cascade training is important to be explored as it would be a benchmark for evaluating success and value of the training initiatives they undertake.

A spectrum of responses arose from teachers in this study through their responses. Teachers like Mr. Adham, Madam Jasmine, Mr. Lim and Miss Lilly are all praises for the cascade training sessions that they had attended. They felt that the cascade training sessions have provided them with the confidence to improve the curriculum, helped them with better classroom management, increased their motivation and enhanced their teaching strategies. Mr. Adham felt that the training sessions may not be perfect but was still good enough. Whereas Madam Jasmine felt that she has learnt a lot of strategies that could help her in her classroom. Similarly, Mr. Lim and Ms. Lilly also felt the same as how Madam Jasmine and Mr. Adham felt. The cascade training gave a sense of rejuvenation and motivation to improve their teaching styles to be aligned with the CEFR-aligned English language curriculum. The excerpts from the teachers' explanations are shown below:

"...okay...it may have some problems or hiccups but I think I gained a lot from the cascade training okay... it actually gave me confidence in exploring the new curriculum..."

(Adham, Interview 2, October 03, 2023)

"...I think the strategies from the cascade training actually helped me to manage my class better as I tried the collaborative activities and other group works that actually keep my class in control..."

(Jasmine, Interview 1, August 25, 2023)

"...After the cascade training I was more motivated and excited to carry out my classroom activities as I had a lot of new ideas, for example erm... the formative assessment techniques....aaand the games that I can do with my students were unlimited..."

(Lim, Interview 2, October 5, 2023)

"....I like the cascade training as the trainers taught me new teaching strategies for all the four skills when they introduced the curriculum....Some of the strategies, like the group writing and also the peer-assessment strategies were quite good which I used in my lesson..."

(Lilly, Interview 2, September 6, 2023)

Following are the statements taken from the guided reflections that reflect the positive view of Mr. Adham, Madam Jasmine and Mr. Lim on cascade training given in their interviews:

“the formative assessment methods I used in this lesson was something that I gained from the cascade training and have been improvising in my lessons”

(Adham, Guided reflection, September 26, 2023)

“I approached today’s lesson with collaborative learning activities as it helps students to understand the task better when they discuss and do together in their groups.”

(Jasmine, Guided reflection, September 04, 2023)

“One of the formative assessment techniques that I used for this lesson is writing a 5-minute summary at the end of the lesson to check their own understanding”.

(Lim, Guided reflection, September 29, 2023)

Based on what was said by Mr. Adham, Madam Jasmine, Mr. Lim and Miss Lilly, the benefits that they have gotten from the cascade training is also reflected in their classroom practices, which shows that the teachers gained the benefits for the cascade training and implement it in their classroom as part of the curriculum implementation. However, the entire situation is different in the case of Madam Mawar, Miss Cempaka and Madam Iris as they seem to have different opinions when it comes to the discussion of benefits gained from the cascade training. They do not completely oppose or condemn the cascade training but the benefits that they claim to have gotten seem to be only at a superficial level. Miss Cempaka felt that the cascade training was done in a very rushed manner leaving her with no space to take time to understand the content. Madam Mawar felt the same as well, but she said in the rush, the trainers did not cover a lot of things during the training in session. Madam Iris, felt the same way too, but they never said that they never learnt anything, they felt despite the issues in the

training, there were always some take aways from the training sessions. These are what they said;

“... ermmm one thing I didn’t like about the training was the sessions were very rushed, so it was hard for me to really understand everything, you know. I won’t say I didn’t learn anything...but if they give me enough time I can learn more..”

(Cempaka, Interview 2, September 05, 2023)

“...the training was done in a rush, so when it was done as such, many things are left uncovered or covered in a touch and go manner, leaving teachers to be puzzled, I didn’t understand a lot of things, I struggled on my own to understand, but then I did get the understanding of what the curriculum is about...”

(Mawar, Interview 1, September 18, 2023)

“...The course I felt everything was....ermm too fast, I needed time to follow and hmmm.... I missed a lot of things during the course as I could not understand a lot of things as the course was moving very fast...”

(Iris, Interview 2, October 17, 2023)

Though Miss Cempaka, Madam Mawar and Madam Iris claimed that they did not gain much favourable benefits from the cascade training, they did mention about how the ideas they gained from the cascade training are helpful in their classroom practices;

“Jigsaw reading is something that I always use for reading activities, I got this idea from the sharing at cascade training.”

(Cempaka, Guided reflection, August 28, 2023)

“For this task I use the peer-evaluation for students to evaluate their friend’s essay. I picked up this from the cascade training and it has been useful.”

(Mawar, Guided reflection, September 21, 2023)

“I always use think-pair-share or think-square-share as a way to develop the communicative skills in students, this is one take away from the course that I always use in my lesson.”

(Iris, Guided reflection, October 13, 2023)

Based on the comparison in the interview statements and excerpts from the guided reflections of Miss Cempaka, Madam Mawar and Madam Iris, although the idea that they felt that nothing much was gained from the cascade training, their classroom practices somehow have the influence or the impact of the cascade training that they

have included to make the teaching and learning process to be aligned with the curriculum.

In summation, the perspectives on the efficacy of cascade training that was explained by the teachers, show a experiences of professional development that is layered. Teachers like Madam Jasmine, Mr. Adham, Miss Lilly and Mr. Lim has given a clear endorsement of the cascade training giving it credit for improving their confidence and enhancing their classroom practices. There is an alignment between their positive feedback and the implementation of the curriculum in the classrooms. Conversely, Madam iris, Madam Mawar and Miss Cempaka was more critical on the cascade training and pointed out on the limitations of the pace and the structure of the training. Despite the criticisms that they have provided, these teachers acknowledged the use of some teaching strategies in their classrooms are take aways from the cascade training. Collectively, the teachers account on the depiction of the cascade training efficacy was not uniformly effective. However, it has to certain extent provide valuable insights and teaching tools that found their ways into these teachers' classroom practices, marking a step towards the intended curriculum implementation.

4.4.1.2 Post-training Challenges

Although the cascade training has equipped them with a wealth of knowledge on curriculum implementation, the real issues started when the teachers had to face the stark reality of curriculum implementation once they returned to school. While embarking on to the implementation phase they started coming across various issues and challenges that

they did not aspect or foreseen during the cascade training sessions. Realisation hit upon them that the training did not completely prepare them to face the reality. One of the teachers' Madam Jasmine felt that the training did not provide her with in-depth knowledge of curriculum implementation, and it was challenging for her to shift her existing practice to a more student-centred approach without proper guidance. On the other hand, Mr. Lim was facing a different issue of catering to the need of his diverse student proficiency. Besides, the teachers also felt that they were not given enough resources to support them in curriculum implementation. The following are some of the challenges that was highlighted during the interview:

"...I faced several challenges and obstacles in implementing the CEFR curriculum after the professional development courses,...ermmm I felt like I needed more in-depth knowledge and practical experience to fully understand and implement the curriculum effectively. Shifting from a teacher-centred approach to a more learner-centred one was quite challenging for me..."

(Jasmine, Interview 1, August 25, 2023)

"...The challenges I faced including adjusting to new teaching strategies, managing diverse student proficiency levels,...aaand integrating continuous assessment. Also...finding appropriate resources to cater to different CEFR levels was challenging..."

(Lim, Interview 2, October 5, 2023)

"...Hurmmm....one of the biggest problem is the lack of resources and materials to support my teaching, you know... aaand I think my own lack of understanding and confidence in the curriculum is also a major obstacle, ...eerrmm you know I felt like I was completely zero after the course....aaand I didn't know how to teach the skills effectively,..."

(Cempaka, Interview 1, August 22, 2023)

"....I faced a lot of problems when I moved into the implementation stage, first.... understanding that curriculum standards in the SOW itself was a challenge...Much time to go through the content myself. It was also difficult to teach as I don't know how to go do the activities in the textbook which some time looked too simple and sometime too difficult..I felt really at a lost at that time..."

(Mawar, Interview 2, September 26, 2023)

“...I didn’t understand the textbook and find it was difficult as we were not so used to this kind of books, and I also don’t know how to start the activities although I attended the meeting and courses..I felt very blur...”
(Iris, Interview 1, September 29, 2023)

Based on the teachers’ explanations, it could be seen that there were a lot of struggles that teachers faced to familiarise themselves with the new curriculum in order to implement the curriculum when it was introduced. However, the question is, are the teachers bogged down with the same issues after several years into implementation? Looking into the guided reflections provided by the teachers, some of them are still struggling with the same issues in the classroom implementations in terms of resources, content of the textbook and addressing diverse student needs. The issues that teachers have highlighted in the guided reflections are:

“It is difficult to find extra learning materials that are suitable for the level of my students.”
(Jasmine, Guided reflections, September 04, 2023)

“the content of the lessons are too foreign for my students and it requires me to do a lot of explanations and yes practice books are not good enough because some are too difficult and some are too easy.”
(Lim, Guided reflection, September 29, 2023)

“It is so tough to do differentiation or other group activities to develop students’ speaking and discussing skills, sometimes it is very difficult to deal with the students when they don’t to listen to you and not interested because the text is not something they like or understand.”
(Cempaka, Guided reflection, August 28, 2023)

“Using technology for my English lesson is difficult, I’m not sure how to do technology integration in my lesson, I mean were are always asked to integrate technology in lessons”
(Mawar, Guided reflection, September 21, 2023)

“I have students with different proficiency levels in my class that I have to deal with, no training has so far address this problem that I have been facing in my class..”
(Iris, Guided reflection, October 13, 2023)

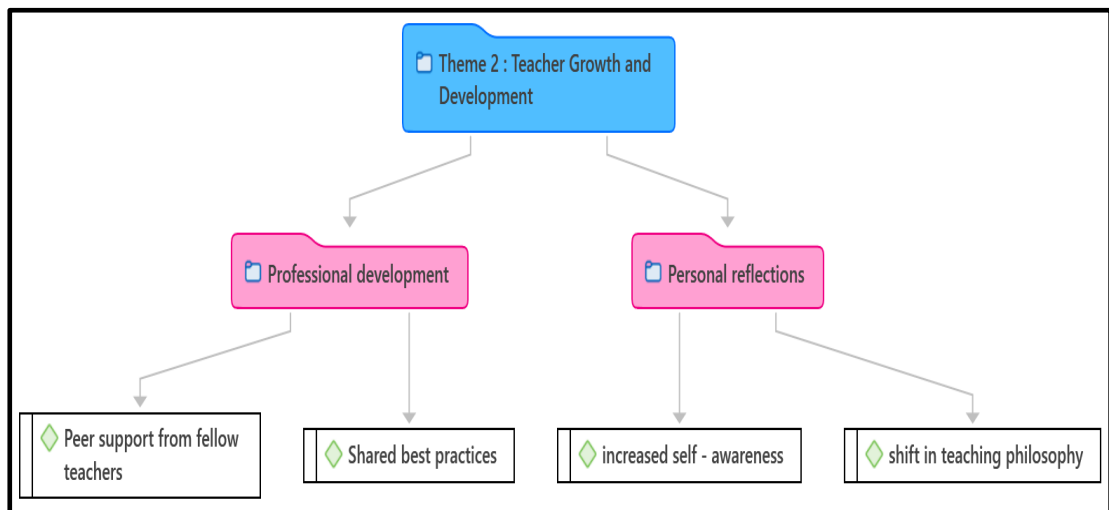
The post-training challenges faced by the teachers underscore a continuous struggle among the teachers in adapting the CEFR-aligned curriculum despite being in implementation since 2015. The teachers' experiences as articulated in the interview and guided reflections' show their challenges in adapting materials appropriate for their lessons, addressing the issues of diverse proficiency levels in their classrooms and integrating technology. The interview data from the teachers highlight a gap between the practical realities of classroom teaching and the training's scope addressing the need for continuous support, resources, and professional development to fulfil the needs in a diversified classroom population.

4.4.2 Theme 2: Teacher Growth and Development

The theme "Teacher growth and development" explores how attending the cascade training has profoundly contributed to teachers shift in their teaching philosophy and increased their self-awareness. Teachers' growth and their development is essential in ensuring the success of curriculum implementation. As shown in Figure 24, this theme is dissected into two subthemes 'personal reflections' and 'professional development' from the interview and guided reflection where it reveals the introspective and nuanced changes in teachers' approach to curriculum implementation. This theme paints a picture of how the cascade training contributes to the evolution of teaching practice, where teachers develop themselves as lifelong learners and innovators in the field of English language teaching.

Figure 24

Theme 2: Teacher Growth and Development



4.4.2.1 Personal Reflections

The personal reflections from the teachers' interviews and guided reflections revealed an introspective journey of shifting in personal teaching philosophy and a deepened self-awareness which invigorated their approach towards their classroom practices. Their reflective insights from guided reflection and open-ended interviews signified individual growth and the impact of the cascade training towards their professional identity. Mr. Lim, as he reflects on his journey he felt that a lot of changes has been made in his classroom practice when he has fully assimilated himself as a student-centred teacher:

“...I try my best to get student to participate in my lessons compared to the old days where I will be doing the discussion. Sometimes...it used to be one way communication. I think now I am more a student – centred teacher, ...ermmm.. I think I do a lot of activities and get students to do more activities like speaking...I don't remember doing speaking when I was teaching the old syllabus....”

(Lim, Interview 2, October 5, 2023)

In the case of Madam Mawar, although she sees struggles in the initial stages, she has moved away from her worriedness of examinations and started focussing on the development of skills among her students. She feels that she has become a better

teacher compared to what she was before this and trying her best to adhere to the curriculum given and implement it in the best way, she could despite the difficulty that she is facing:

“...I think now I do a lot more activities in classla, last time always busy with exam and so scare result will drop, now better because, I don’t have to worry about the exam, everything is already in the syllabus, so I just focus on developing the skills, the speaking skills especially, very difficult in the beginning, I also not so sure how to do it it but then after few times doing you know what strategies you use, so thinking back my lesson now and last time, I think I am a better teacher nowla...” (Mawar, Interview 1, September 18, 2023)

Similar to Madam Mawar, Madam Jasmine upon reflecting her classroom practices in the guided reflection, has stated that she has changed tremendously and is open for trying new ideas in her classroom. She also reflects on how she has started exploring new approaches to make her teaching more meaningful:

“I think my teaching style now changed a lot, I am more open now, in terms of getting more ideas to teach, I try to use new ideas to get my students to speak better or to improve their writing skills which is more focussed now, last time I don’t know how to break things down, now I know how to slowly develop the skills, I also now started to do more exploring as finding new materials and ideas to teach. I never used peer – assessment strategies or self – assessment tool kit in my class before this CEFR syllabus was introduced, after the CEFR course, I am using it now.” (Jasmine, Guided reflection, September 04, 2023)

Just like the others, Madam Tulips through her guided reflection has also poured her heart out, stating how she has become a changed teacher who is excited and happy to implement the curriculum by including a myriad of activities to make the learning process for her students more meaningful. She has also developed good relationship with her students when she changed her ways:

“I realise I am more excited to teach not just practicing. I really like the new syllabus after the cascade training because I can do a lot of activities and while I do the activities I also learn a lot of new things, my practice has become a learning journey for me too, I also realise my students like me better now compared to last time.” (Tulips, Guided reflection, October 5, 2023)

The conclusion that can be drawn from subtheme ‘personal reflections’ is that the teachers went through a transformative process which was an evolution to their teaching approaches after the cascade training. the classroom practices that was predominantly exam-focussed and teacher-centred had become a more dynamic student-centred environment focussing on developing communicative competence of the English language skills. The teachers’ transformation did not only improve students’ engagement but also redefined the teachers’ teaching philosophies and provided them the opportunity to rethink and develop their understanding on the process of teaching and learning of the English language.

4.4.2.2 Professional Development

In making teachers in Malaysia to understand the CEFR-aligned KSSM English language curriculum, the cascade training has played a crucial role. At the same time, teachers need to constantly update themselves on the strategies that they can use or improvise in order to keep themselves progressive in the implementation of the curriculum. The subtheme ‘professional development’ is standing as a testament to the adaptation and the progress that teachers had undergone in the wake of the cascade training. This subtheme explores the explanations of the teachers on their exploration for professional growth through the sharing of best practices and building a strong support system among peers.

As we look in this analysis, the teachers’ detail their professional enrichment and collaborative experiences that was gained through fellow educators. This subtheme looks how peer support provides scaffolding for teachers as they try to understand the curriculum and implement it in their classroom practices. Also, how teachers’

willingness to share and support one another bolsters their teaching acumen. This part will reveal the multifaceted nature of professional development. Based on the foundation of shared knowledge and professional camaraderie, the ideas that emerge from the interviews and guided reflections paint a vivid picture of teachers' professional development and provide us a clearer picture of how best practices and peer support are critical in helping teachers in curriculum implementation. The following are open-ended interviews and guided reflections provided by Madam Jasmine, Miss Cempaka, Mr. Lim, Miss Tulips and Madam Iris:

"...hurmmm...I looked for opportunities for myself. As a teacher, it's important to stay updated with the latest teaching methods, you know. So... I go for conferences and workshops listen to presentations and learn from other teachers' sharing..."

(Jasmine, Interview 2, September 07, 2023)

"...I also get support from colleagues on things I forgot and keep myself updated with techniques, I ask for help, they also share their idea and I use them in my class..."

(Cempaka, Interview 1, August 22, 2023)

"The worksheet, I took from a Facebook CEFR teachers' support group, It is good and easy for me when I busy, I can just take from there."

(Lim, Guided reflection, September 29, 2023)

"the idea for this lesson was adapted for a CEFR teachers' support group. This group we share our classroom ideas here and it is very helpful in improving my own lesson. I learn new ideas from other teachers too."

(Tulips, Guided reflection, October 5, 2023)

"...I keep in touch with some friends from the cascade course, so I ask them if I have problem and we share ideas, sometime activities and teaching materials..."

(Iris, Interview 2, October 17, 2023)

"...I will always ask friends and teachers I know to share with me their lesson plans or ideas. From there I also adapt ideas. I also on facebook follow Dr. Ilha, I follow her page to get teaching ideas. If there are any webinar... I join as they are very interesting to know teachers sharing ideas..."

(Mawar, Interview 2, September 26, 2023)

The interview and guided reflections from the teachers show that, while structured effort was taken through cascade training to disseminate the knowledge, teachers have

gone to great lengths to proactively stride in their professional development by building a robust network of support and resource-sharing. The teachers did not rely on the formal training, but they have extended their learning through social media groups, conferences, and personal connections. This self-driven effort is instrumental in navigating the CEFR-aligned curriculum effectively.

4.4.3 Theme 3: Teacher-centredness

The theme ‘Teacher-centredness’ looks into the existence of traditional approach of teacher-centred classroom practices which may be in practice even after the cascade training aimed at fostering communicative competence and student-centred learning has been disseminated among teachers through the training. Besides, teacher-centred practice has been a plague among the teaching fraternity for a long time:

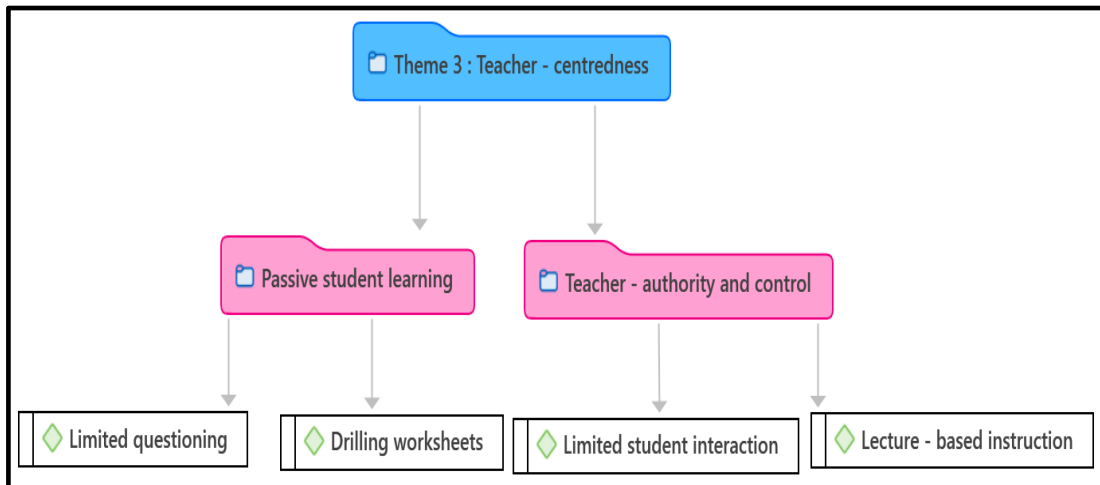
“teaching in Malaysian classrooms is highly characterised by teacher-centred approaches and the chalk- and-talk drill method. The most popular teaching method is also reported to be drilling using past-year examination questions, work sheets and exercise books.”

(English Language Education Roadmap, 2015 – 2025, page 206)

It is important to explore the extent to which teacher authority and control, and the passive student learning continued to be practiced in classroom despite the cascade training being carried out. The subthemes of ‘teacher-authority and control’ and ‘passive student learning’ leads to the theme teacher-centredness as shown in Figure 25. Through the lens of the theme ‘teacher-centredness’ we are looking into the current state of teacher-centred practices and measure the impact of cascade training on these instructional approaches.

Figure 25

Theme 3: Teacher-centredness



4.4.3.1 Teacher-authority and Control

The subtheme ‘Teacher-authority and control’ explores into the accounts of teachers focussing on the prevalence of lecture-based instruction, teacher-led discussion and minimised student participation. The subtheme explores the extent of teachers becoming the forefront of the educational experience, potentially at the expense of student engagement and autonomy in classroom practices.

In the open-ended interviews teachers have given the instances where teacher-centredness creeps into their lessons. Madam Jasmine for example, feels that she is talking a lot more than her students in the class. Whereas Ms. Lilly finds that it is difficult for her students to be engaged in her lessons and are mostly passive which frustrates her, that she had to resort to teacher-centred practices in such classes. In the case Madam Tulips and a few other teachers, it is difficult for them to have student-centred activities with their low proficiency students who have limited language skills, and they have to be slow in their instructions, which led to teacher-centred practices in their classrooms. The following are some interviews and guided reflections to show

the extent of the existence of teacher-centred practices in classroom post-cascade training.

“...at times I realise that I do more talking and students just listening, I try to minimise it but it tend to happen...”

(Jasmine, Interview 2, September 07, 2023)

“...In some classes, I have to explain everything to students, they just don't want to open their mouth to speak, when I ask question nobody want to answer, I try to use ice-cream stick to ask them to answer but then they just give one word or two word answer or sometime they just shake their shoulders...”

(Lilly, Interview 1, August 29, 2023)

“For the listening part, I played the audio, students listened the audio and answer the questions in the textbook. After that I discuss the answers. For the speaking, my students are weak, they can't speak on their own, so I give them short extracts and dialogues I ask them to read aloud and practice repeatedly, I also ask them to memorise one or two lines and speak those lines before the lesson ends.”

(Iris, Guided reflection, October 13, 2023)

“For the discussion part of the lesson, I gave students the script, asked them to read aloud, and then we discuss about the script, then students will practice with one another, after that they will try to speak without the script but will follow what in the script, this way I can help students to build knowledge on speaking especially for my middle and weak group.”

(Cempaka, Guided reflection, August 28, 2023)

“...Some of my classes can't just follow instructions, they get confused, so I go slowly with them, for example for this reading lesson, I give them 5 minutes to read, after reading I explain the difficult words, and I try to ask questions, the simple one word questions they will answer, but if long sentences they won't speak, so I have to again explain the answer, errmmmm, if I ask them to do group discussion, they will keep quiet or they will discuss in Bahasa or their mother tongue, uhm... so I have to keep on talking and explaining...”

(Tulips, Interview 2, October 11, 2023)

“...I'm not a teacher-centred person, butkan....at times I have to do lecture style, to actually explain things that students cannot understand...”

(Mawar, Interview 2, September 26, 2023)

As illustrated by teachers; Madam Jasmine, Miss Lilly and the other teachers, despite the requirements towards student-centred practices to develop communicative

competence, the classroom challenges posed by the teachers necessitate towards the resurgence of teacher-centred practices. Among the barriers highlighted by the teachers were the student passivity and language barriers, which is a reflection of the reality of their classrooms. Teachers' reflections and interviews revealed a complex reality where the ideal of communicative competence coexist with teacher-centredness especially with diverse student abilities and engagement levels. The existence of the teacher-centredness in the said teachers' classroom practices is not due to their reluctance to embrace student-centred learning but to ensure clarity and to scaffold effective student learning within their teaching and learning environment.

4.4.3.2 Passive Student Learning

Moving on from 'Teacher-authority and control', we move our focus to the subtheme 'Passive student learning' to explore the dynamics of classroom interaction post-cascade training. One of the concerns raised in the English Language Education Roadmap 2015 – 2025:

“Several important issues on the teaching and learning of the English language relate to classroom practices that have strayed from the main intent of learning a language for communication in the first place. Our students are unable to operate autonomously and instead play the role of empty vessels relying on teachers to fill them with knowledge”.

(English Language Education Roadmap, 2015 – 2025, p.201)

Despite the efforts taken for student-centred approaches in classroom through the cascade training, students' roles in learning may have not moved to become active learners and rather prefer to be passive-learners who may have indirectly promoted teacher-centredness rather than student-centredness. From teachers' interviews and guided reflections, it is important to uncover whether students have moved from the peripheries of being passive participants to become more active learners in their

learning in classroom. This part will also look delve into the challenges that teachers face in making students to become active learners.

Madam Tulips, Miss Cempaka and Madam Iris are among the teachers who are facing problems with passive learners in their classrooms, that may have caused them to resort to teacher-centred learning. They also further narrated about their students' responses in their classrooms. Madam Tulips says that her usually noisy students tend to quiet down during her English lessons as they are too afraid to speak the language but they could complete all the drilling activities that she prepares for them:

"My class is usually noisy but when it comes to English, they are quiet and they refuse to speak. They just don't want to try or too afraid to try. They are not comfortable speaking, but they are willing to do all the drilling activities I give them."

(Tulips, Guided reflection, October 5, 2023)

While Madam Tulips students display an act of anxiety during the English lessons, Miss Cempaka has it more difficult as her students do not show interest towards the language and further displays body language showing their disapproval and lack of interest towards the language:

"...they don't like me calling them for answers, they don't like to answer questions, they make faces when I call them, sometimes really geram tau, they also refuse to try to speak in English, always answer in Bahasa Malaysia... Hmmm...when I ask them to do group presentation they always read from paper rather than trying to explain..."

(Cempaka, Interview 1, August 22, 2023)

In Madam Iris' classroom, her students are not either like Miss Cempaka's or Madam Tulips' students. They answer questions only when they are asked to and prefer to keep their answers short and other than that they do not show voluntary participation in the English language lesson.

'...They don't speak or answer questions on their own when I ask questions, they only speak when I ask them to, that also they give very short answer and don't want to explain more ...'

(Iris, Interview 2, October 17, 2023)

While Madam Iris, Miss Cempaka and Madam Tulips highlighted on reluctant students and passive learners as well as preferences towards drilling tasks, Mr. Adham, Mr. Lim and Madam Mawar described the transitions in their classrooms.

In order to make his lessons more interactive and interesting Mr. Lim encourages students' participation in his lessons. Although he found it difficult at first, eventually it bore fruit and students came out of their comfort zone and no longer shy away from using the language in classroom.

"...ermmm...I encourage students to participate actively, ask questions, and practice their language skills in a safe and encouraging setting, they are reluctant at first,....but hurmm....in my class after a while they get comfortable, and participate actively in the lesson..."

(Lim, Interview 1, September 22, 2023)

In Mr. Adham's classroom, he chooses to provide motivation and focus on the students' positive aspect of how much they can deal with the language to make the students active and participate in the English language activities in class.

"...Okay, because to me, when we focus more on what the student can do, rather than what the student cannot do, then we are actually giving them motivation to actually go further, to enhance themselves, okay, in terms of their linguistic and language ability. I can see in the classroom, we allow our students to explore their capabilities, to explore their interests. Okay, at the same time, we help them to develop their language, their confidence in using the language itself and so on...."

(Adham, Interview 2, October 03, 2023)

In her reflection, Madam Mawar do not seem to have any problem in making her students to be participative in her lessons as she has strategies to ensure the students have enough time to think and present their ideas:

“when I ask questions, I have a wait time for my students to think and give me answers. I also had a few questions coming in from my students while doing group task. There were plenty of interaction throughout the lesson; student-student interaction and also teacher-student interaction.”

(Mawar, Guided reflection, September 21, 2023)

The subtheme ‘Passive student learning’ highlights an important tension in classroom practice post the cascade training. The struggle among the teachers is obviously seen among teachers like Madam Tulips, Miss Cempaka and Madam Iris who find it difficult to transition into student-centred due to reluctance among students to show active participation and leaned towards’ teachers spoon-feeding them and drilling activities. On the other hand, Mr. Lim, Mr. Adham and Madam Mawar observe student participation and interaction which is the result of their supportive approach and the practice of slow progression. Overall, through the theme teacher-centredness it can be illustrated that there is a progression towards making learner-centred as a central way of learning in the Malaysian English language classrooms.

4.4.4 Theme 4: Exam-oriented Practices

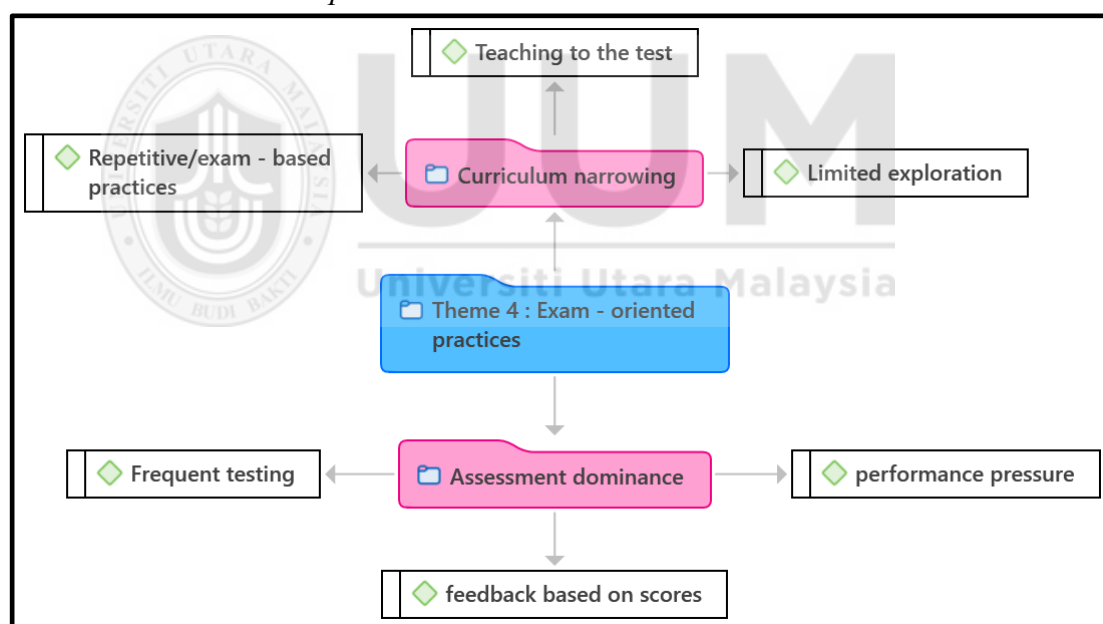
The theme ‘exam-oriented practices’ looks into the existence of classroom practices that are focussed on examination. This is of paramount important to be looked into the extent of teachers focussing into exam-oriented practices like teaching to the test, not covering skills that are not tested in public or school examinations, repetitive practices doing repeatedly to familiarise with exam, regular exam-based quizzes, testing and giving feedback based on test scores or grades. One of the ultimate purposes for the introduction of the current CEFR-aligned curriculum in 2016 was to eradicate the exam-oriented practices that was overwhelmingly happening in the implementation of the previous curriculum:

“the current examination system has a negative washback effect on teaching and learning, as it encourages teachers to focus on exam preparation rather than on developing students’ communicative competence.”
(Cambridge Baseline Study, 2013, page 109)

Therefore, it is important to explore the extent of examination-based practices in the teachers’ classrooms post the cascade training, whether teachers still stick to the belief that classroom practices should be exam-oriented. To explore in-depth and more specifically on exam-oriented practices, this theme has been divided into two subthemes ‘curriculum narrowing’ and ‘assessment dominance classroom practices’ as shown in Figure 26:

Figure 26

Theme 4: Exam-oriented practices



4.4.4.1 Curriculum Narrowing

The subtheme ‘curriculum narrowing’ explores the practice of eliminating elements in the curriculum documents that are not included in the test format and only looking into exploring the elements of the curriculum that is tested in examination. Teachers’

interviews and guided reflections show their stand and practices regarding this. Miss Cempaka seems to focus on aligning her lessons with the examination format and the specific skills needed in the exam. She also seems to have skipped parts of the curriculum which she feels unimportant in examination, which is a clear practice of curriculum narrowing:

“...ermmm....I make sure to align my lessons with the exam format and focus on the skills important in the exams, ermddd.... but I also still follow the CEFR framework. Aah...sometimes, I don't do some of the literature part to discuss the sample exam papers... ermddd...I have to do it like this, as I am answerable to my principal if the English result go down...”

(Cempaka, Interview 2, September 05, 2023)

Madam Mawar on the other hand, seemed to be more worried that what she teaches in her classroom may not be tested in the exam, so she tried to make sure there are examination practices happening in her classroom just to please her students' and their parents' demand. Like Miss Cempaka, Madam Mawar practices curriculum narrowing in her classroom to fit in examination practices:

“...I was worried I may not teach what will be tested in the exams. So, I include exam-practices with what I teach. I don't want students and parents to blame me that I did not teach the children what will be tested in their examskan... So, I skip some parts in the textbook, but the sample exam practices are related to the topic in textbook also...”

(Mawar, Guided reflection, September 21, 2023)

Mr. Lim has a different view compared to Ms. Cempaka and Madam Mawar. He firmly believes no matter what he does in the class at the end of the day the examination scores take precedent. So, just to make sure his students are aware of the format he carries out monthly test:

“... well aaaa...whatever I do in my classroom, at the end of the day, exam result is what matters, so I also make sure with the activities I do, I also have examination practices or ermddd....like a monthly test, like at least once in a month so that students understand the format...”

(Lim, Interview 1, September 22, 2023)

Madam Tulips just like Madam Mawar and Miss Cempaka, performs the acts of curriculum narrowing to ensure that she has enough time to cover parts that are important for examinations and do examination practices with her students:

"I don't cover everything in the textbook, whatever that may not be important for exam I will skip to save time. There are just too many activities, and I can't cover everything."

(Tulips, Guided reflection, October 5, 2023)

Just like others, while performing curriculum narrowing, Madam Iris also ensures that the lessons that she carries out in her classroom are also added with some examination practices to ensure that her students understand the format of the exam and are prepared for answering the questions in examinations:

"Students need to understand how exam format look like so if I do reading, I will also give the SPM styled reading practice for them to practice so that they understand how it is done in SPM' and if I don't have enough time, I will skip parts where the skill is not important for exam."

(Iris, Guided reflection, October 13, 2023)

Unlike others, Madam Jasmine felt that in her weak classes she has to do exam-based practices more often and repeatedly than her other classes as it takes time for them to understand, and this is also at the expense of implementing the curriculum as it is:

"...for my weak classes, I have to admit I do exam-based practices quite often also for them to understand the format and the skills to answer the questions, I do it many times so that they remember, especially the speaking part hurrmm..., I have to do it again and again so they know what to say and how to say it during the exam.."

(Jasmine, Interview 2, September 07, 2023)

Although cascade training was done to eliminate the washback effect of exam-oriented practices interview with teachers suggest that curriculum narrowing, and exam-oriented approaches are still in practice. Teachers acknowledged the fact that aligning their teaching with exam expectations due to the pressure put on them by the school admins, parents and also students' aspirations to do well in the exam.

4.4.4.2 Assessment Dominance

The subtheme ‘assessment dominance’ looks at how classroom practices are using frequent test like quizzes to measure student performance and place the emphasis on the importance of test score. Besides, the feedback given to students’ performance are also primarily based on marks and grades. The following show the extent of assessment dominance occur in the classrooms post- cascade training. Miss Lilly carries out a monthly assessment just to check her students’ progress and achievements and she keeps record to observe their progression:

“...I carry out monthly test mostly for reading and writing to measure students’ achievement and how much they have improved. I keep the record to see their progress...”

(Lilly, Interview 1, August 29, 2023)

In Mr. Adham’s classroom test or assessment is carried out to check students’ progression and how he helps his students to improve further in his next lesson. It is also a way for him to understand what worked well in his practice and what can be improved further:

“I do carry out test at times just to check whether students have mastered whatever they have learned so far, but that is not my primary source to determine the level of students understanding, I know test is important but I don’t rely on it completely and I use it as a tool to see what I can do next to help my students.”

(Adham, Guided reflection, September 26, 2023)

While Mr. Adham and Miss Lilly’s purpose for having assessment is to check students’ progression, Miss Cempaka’s focus is to see how much students can perform in examinations, her classroom assessment seems like a mock exam before the real one:

“Without quizzes or performance test it will be very difficult to see what students can do in exams, so I do quizzes and tests whenever possible, like I did one in this lesson.”

(Cempaka, Guided reflection, August 28, 2023)

Madam Tulips is more focussed on her assessment as she provides feedback to her students on what to improve based on the monthly test that she carries out, but her feedback and probably suggestions for improvisation revolves around improving for the public examination, rather than genuinely improving the language skills:

“...I normally give feedback based on the monthly test I carryout, they are not consistent every month, but I can actually know what is their level and know what to tell them to improve for their SPM...”

(Tulips, Interview 2, October 11, 2023)

Just like some other teachers, Madam Iris too is too absorbed into assessing students to prepare them for examination rather than focussing on actually improvising the language skills:

“For today’s lesson, at the end I did a listening pop quiz for the topic. It was SPM exam format. It is better to carry out this test to know how students will score if this topic is tested in SPM.”

(Iris, Guided reflection, October 13, 2023)

The subtheme ‘assessment dominance’ shows a persistence of traditional testing methods practised in classrooms. Despite various forms of assessments have been introduced for a more holistic assessment approaches, traditional testing methods such as monthly tests and quizzes seem to have taken control in checking students understanding in a rather summative way. Besides, the practice of providing score-based feedback from these quizzes and tests seem to be a cornerstone in the evaluation of students’ learning. Collectively, the theme exam-oriented practices reveal the existence of a deep-seated exam-oriented mindset among teachers even after the cascade training. The theme ‘exam- oriented practices’ shows methodologies that are focussed on assessment in classroom existing even after the cascade training was carried out with the expectation of pedagogical transformation among teachers. The interviews and guided reflections from the teachers highlight a complex challenge of

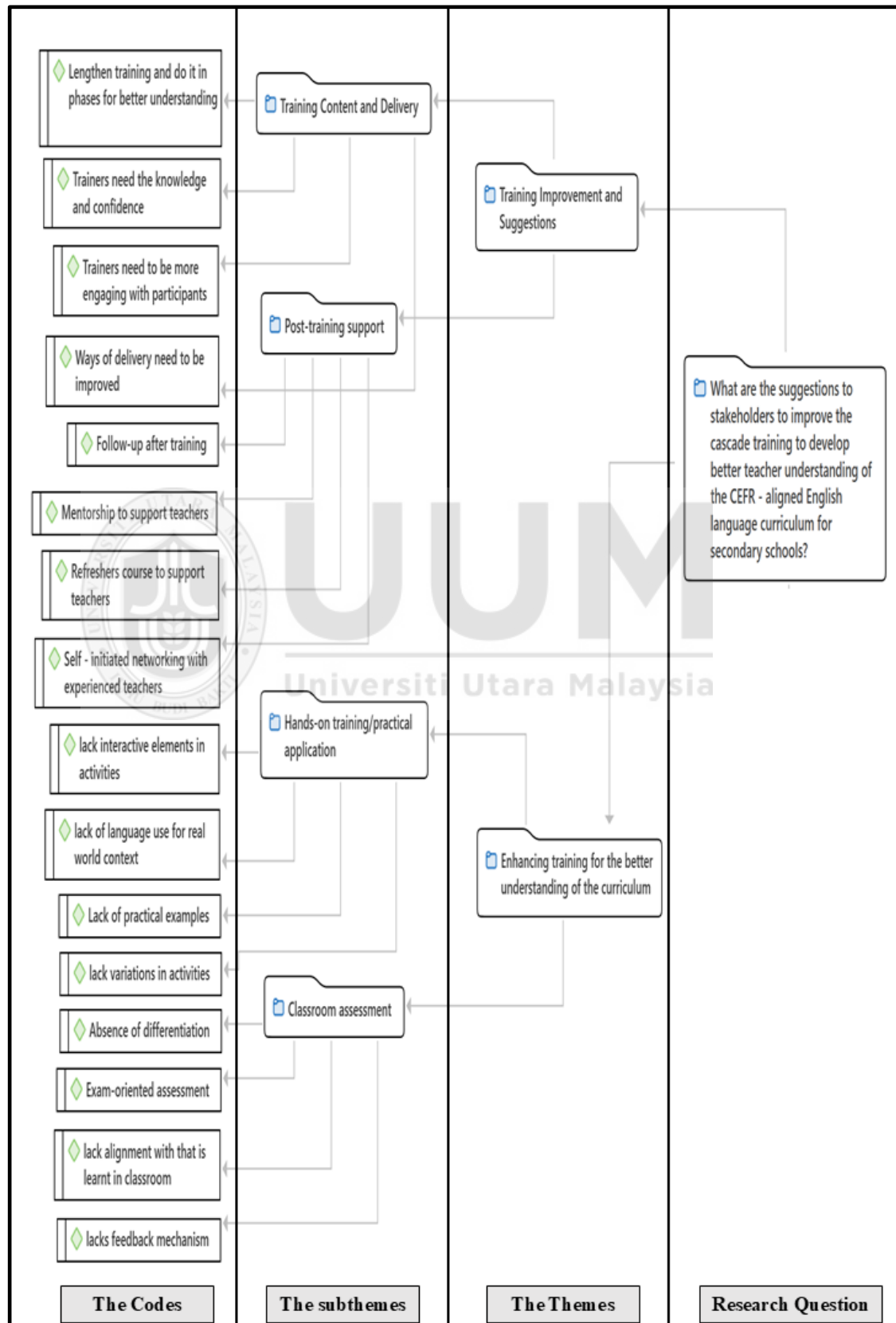
shifting educational culture and teacher mindset from being test or performance-oriented to a more expansive view of students learning through developing communicative competence.

4.5 Research Question 3: What are the Suggestions to Stakeholders to Improve the Cascade Training to Develop Better Teacher Understanding of the CEFR-aligned English Language Curriculum for Secondary Schools?

In addressing the question of how to improve the cascade training to improve for a better teacher understanding of the CEFR-aligned English language curriculum for secondary schools, this study further embarks into the effectiveness and possible rooms for improvements in the current cascade training through the issues identified in the training and classroom practices. The insight for this analysis is gathered from teachers' open-ended interviews, their lesson documents such as lesson plans and students' work or materials used for their lessons as well as their guided reflections. This approach provides rich perspectives and evidence from teachers informing on the possible suggestions and improvisation on the cascade training for curriculum implementation. This part will discuss the analysis for this in two themes namely, 'Training improvement and suggestions' and 'enhancing training for better curriculum implementation' which will be focussing on two different aspects. Figure 27 shows the diagram of the formation of the themes through the codes and subthemes that led to the 2 themes that provided answers to the aforementioned research question.

Figure 27

Thematic analysis for the suggestions to improve the cascade training to develop better understanding the CEFR-aligned English language curriculum for secondary schools.

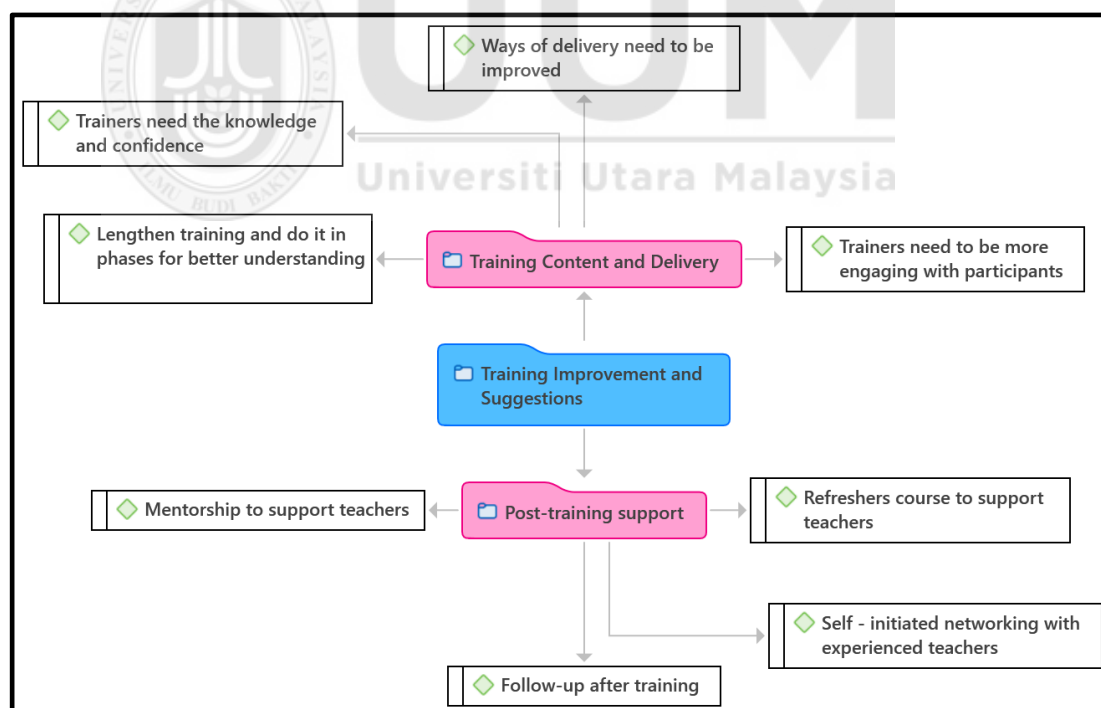


4.5.1 Theme 1: Training Improvement and Suggestions

The theme ‘Training improvement and suggestions’ encapsulates the multifaceted nature of the cascade training and the many ways it can be improvised through two subthemes ‘training delivery’ and ‘post-training support’ as shown in Figure 28. Through the subthemes this theme is dissecting the issues in the current training approaches and what are the things that need to be improvised in the way the training is carried out and propose actionable improvements that could potentially revolutionise the cascade training approach, enhancing the pedagogical skills of teachers which will consequently improve the learning outcomes of the students.

Figure 28

Theme 1: Training Improvement and suggestions



4.5.1.1 Training Delivery

The subtheme ‘Training delivery’ looks into the operational challenges in the cascade training that may have affected teachers’ understanding of the curriculum for curriculum implementation. Through the exploration of this subtheme, the intricacies behind the training delivery mechanism could be understood, the issues can be identified and proper suggestion for improvisation can be given. A certain fraction of teachers who were involved in this study felt that the cascade training was not well-developed and conducted. They stated that the training was done in a rush and trainers’ lack the experience and engagement to be among the major setbacks in training delivery.

Mr. Adham felt that the training was carried out for only three days with insurmountable amount of information to be digested. He felt that the training was carried out in a short time with so much input that was difficult to digest. The issue laid forth by Mr. Adham is suggestive for a longer training that would allow teachers to understand the content of the training better without any rush. Similarly, Miss Cempaka felt the same way, and she felt that it was difficult for her to understand as the training was done in a rush:

“...okay the training was carried out for three days okay and it was too short of a time, hurmmm.....they should have done it in phases for a longer period of time so that teachers had time to digest the content...”
(Adham, Interview 2, October 03, 2023)

“.....hmmmm.....and the training sessions were very rushed....., it was so.... hard for me to really understand everything, you know...”
(Cempaka, Interview 2, September 05, 2023)

While Mr. Adham and Miss Cempaka had issues with the length of the training, Miss Lilly’s issue with the training was the engagement of the trainers. She felt the trainers did not pay much attention to the teachers’ need and was absorbed in their own world

during the training. A lot of doubts and questions she felt were left unanswered. Her comments on this suggest for a more experienced and knowledgeable trainer who would be able to capture the teachers' attention and tend to their questions during training. This is also suggesting the training for the trainers should be improvised to build their knowledge and skills in training:

"...I suggest that the trainer should be more engaging at times I feel the trainers were more like 'syok sendiri' without knowing what the participants actually understand..."

(Lilly, Interview 1, August 29, 2023)

Madam Mawar's experience with the training is similar of Mr. Adham and Miss Lilly's experiences which suggests similar improvements in the training in terms of the training length and trainers' knowledge:

"...As for the weaknesseskan, the training was done in a rush, so when it was done as such, many things are left uncovered or covered in a touch and go mannerlar, leaving teachers to be puzzled, hurmmm...the trainers also need to understand what they are training the teachers forlar, during the they themselves cannot understand what they were conveying..."

(Mawar, Interview 2, September 26, 2023)

Just like others, despite being someone who is positive about the training, Madam Jasmine felt that there was something that could not fulfil her need. She felt that the training was lacking depth in terms of knowledge and developing practical experiences for teachers. This suggests that the training needs to explore more techniques and strategies more in-depth to develop teachers' understanding:

"...Like I mentioned before, the training I went for was not very comprehensive, you know. So urmmm.... I felt like I needed more knowledge and practical experiences to fully understand and implement the curriculum effectively..."

(Jasmine, Interview 1, August 25, 2023)

Compared to all others, Madam Iris had nothing negative to say about the training, but she could feel that the training wasn't complete. She felt that whatever that is shared during the training was difficult to bring them into the real classroom. So she felt as if

there is a missing link between the training content and classroom practices. This calls for a more comprehensive training programme that can cater to the needs of teachers who are teaching in schools with different student backgrounds:

“...hurmmm....the trainers were ok, but I think there is always something missing whatever they say and not linking to my classroom practice...”
(Iris, Interview 1, September 29, 2023)

The subtheme ‘training delivery’ able to identify the critical issues related to the cascade training that may affect implementation of the curriculum. The issues identified through this subtheme enabled the suggestions for solutions. Issues identified under this theme were, training schedule that were too packed and rushed affects teachers understanding, trainers lacking the in-depth knowledge of the training content affects their engagement with course participants and also disconnection between classroom practices and training content.

4.5.1.2 Post-training Support

The subtheme ‘post-training support’ explores the requirements and needs for support post the cascade training in terms of implementing the curriculum in accordance to the CEFR-aligned curriculum. This subtheme is crucial in understanding and resolving the difficulties and challenges faced by teachers as they manoeuvre to apply the curriculum in their classroom practices.

Teachers Miss Cempaka, Madam Jasmine and Miss Tulips felt that there were lack of support and guidance after the cascade training that they struggled to navigate the curriculum in their classrooms. This was because they did not know who to refer to in when they had problems to implement the curriculum. The struggle that teachers face after the cascade training without proper support and guidance leads for a suggestion

to post-training support for teachers for a certain period of time so that the teachers will know what to do and who to refer to whenever they need help in the matters of curriculum implementation:

“...I didn't receive much follow-up support or guidance after the training, you know. So it was so.... difficult to refer back to someone, I called back the trainer but hurmmm..... she wasn't helpful enough...”
(Cempaka, Interview 1, August 22, 2023)

“...it would be great to have ongoing support and mentorship after the training. Hurmmmm.... maybe we could be paired with experienced teachers or trainers who can guide us, ermmm....answer our questions, and.... give us feedback on our lesson plans and teaching methods...”
(Jasmine, Interview 2, September 07, 2023)

“...I think teachers need to be given support in terms of material selection as well as resources after the cascade training.... From the trainings I attend everything ends after the training and you are on your own, sometimes, I don't know whether they are suitable or not...”
(Tulips, Interview 2, October 11, 2023)

While teachers struggle to find support, some teachers like Madam Mawar and Madam Iris found solace by creating their own support groups via social media applications like the ‘Telegram’ and ‘WhatsApp’ to support and help one another. These groups play the role as support group by disseminating teaching materials, lesson plans and teaching ideas that could be helpful for the teachers in curriculum implementation. The members of the group answer query from each other. These platforms where many teachers find to be very helpful are not official platforms and the materials, documents and ideas are not validated by anyone with experience in the field. Therefore, support groups like these need to be monitored or the Ministry of Education, should have their own support group as a platform to support and help teachers in curriculum implementation that will be more effective:

“...This lesson I actually got the idea from the group in the teacher group who attended the cascade training...”

(Iris, Interview 1, September 29, 2023)

“...I get support and help from fellow teachers who share ideas and worksheets on the lessons in our teacher group, ermmm... it helps me with a lot of ideas that I could get...things I don't understand I ask them alsolar...”

(Mawar, Interview 1, September 18, 2023)

The subtheme ‘post-training support’ highlighted the importance for a continuous assistance post the cascade training to provide guidance for teachers. Teachers in the study had clearly expressed their desire for a follow-up support, mentorship programmes, on-going professional support and providing of support for teaching materials post training. From their experiences, it could be seen a gap in post-training resources, with specific call for mentor support so that they don't deviate from the objective of the curriculum and able to understand the curriculum implementation in a practical situation at school. Some teachers despite there were no support, found comfort and solace from fellow teachers who attended the cascade training so that they could exchange their understandings and other training materials.

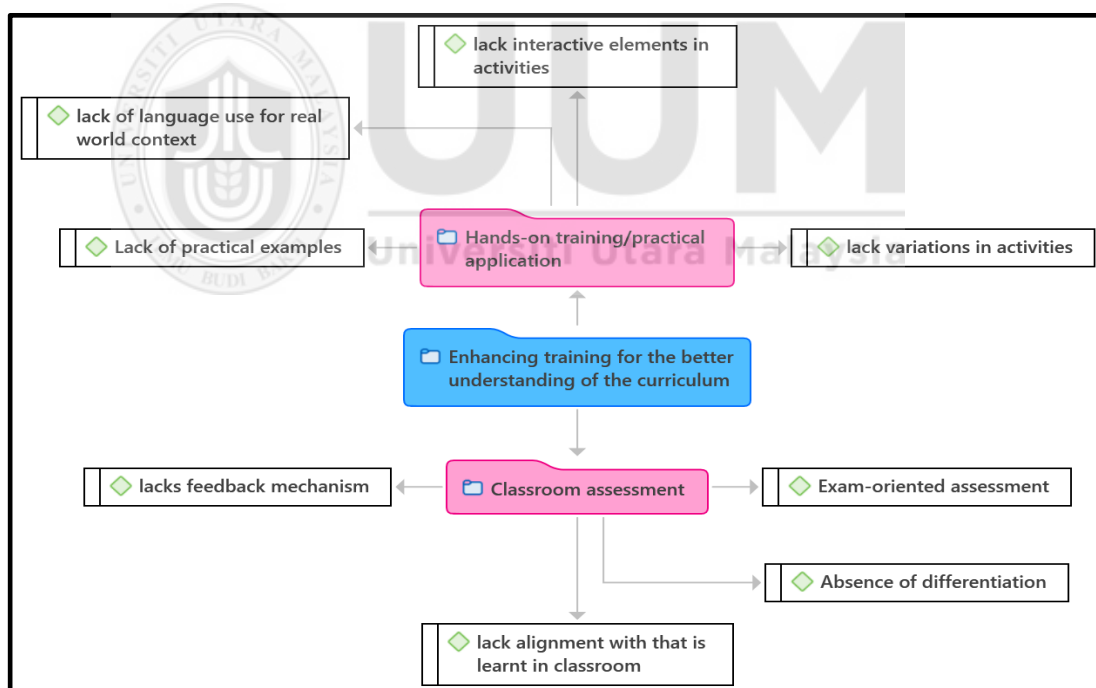
Overall, this subtheme suggests for a comprehensive post-training support with a structured follow up, mentorship and network to ensure that the curriculum implementation could take place effectively while the teachers develop their professional growth. To summarise, the theme ‘training improvement and suggestions’ dwells into the issues that was found within the delivery of the cascade training. This is taken into account as effective training delivery will foster better understanding of the curriculum and its implementation. By identifying the issues within it, proper suggestions for improvisations of the cascade training can be drawn.

4.5.2. Theme 2: Enhancing Training for the Better Understanding of the Curriculum

The theme ‘enhancing training for the better understanding of the curriculum’ looks into the aspects of improvisations in the cascade training in terms of making teachers understand their classroom practices for a better curriculum implementation. This theme is explored in two subthemes: ‘Hands on training and practical application’ and ‘classroom assessments’ as shown in Figure 29. These two subthemes emerge from the shortcomings identified in teacher practices reflected in lesson plans and worksheets as well as their interviews.

Figure 29

Theme 2: Enhancing training for better understanding of the curriculum



4.5.2.1 Hands on Training and Practical Application

The subtheme “Hands-on training and practical application” explores the necessity of making the cascade training ‘hands-on’ for teachers to learn more actively through

experiential learning. Teachers felt that through practical experiences they could relate what was learnt in their classrooms better, but then the cascade training sessions provided limited opportunities for them to do practical activities due to time limitations. For example, Madam Iris, Madam Tulips and Ms. Cempaka are among the teachers who felt that the cascade training provided lack of opportunity for hands on training and practical applications.

Madam Iris felt that they were given samples of activities and lesson plans during the training, but opportunities were not given to them to develop their own due to lack of time, which suggest the training should be providing more opportunities for teachers to explore so that they understand it better:

“...During the training we were shown examples of activities and lesson plans, but we did not have enough time to actually develop lesson plans integrating the activities...”

(Iris, Interview 2, October 17, 2023)

Due to lack of practical opportunities during the training, teachers like Miss Tulips find it difficult to integrate the training take aways in their classroom practices:

“...It took me some time to adjust my teaching methods and find ways to engage my students more actively in the learning process, you know....hurmm.. ..they actually didn't help us integrate the methods in classroom, errmm.. everything was concept and ideas, but didn't actually give us time to digest during the training to come out with a lesson or something to actually show how we have understood...”

(Tulips, Interview 1, September 27, 2023)

The lecture-like training has impacted teachers understanding who were expecting a more hands-on and practical training on curriculum implementation:

“... ermmmm I was also hoping for more hands-on and practical training on how to implement the curriculum in my classroom, but the training sessions were just lectures and presentations.... I don't think the trainings were very effective in helping me understand the curriculum...”

(Cempaka, Interview 2, September 05, 2023)

Looking at Madam Iris, Madam Tulips and Madam Cempaka's lesson documents, they too seem to be not aligned with the requirements of the CEFR-aligned curriculum where their lesson documents lack interactive elements, lack variations in activities and also lack opportunities for language use for real world context. The following Figure 30 is an excerpt from Madam Iris' lesson.

Figure 30

Lesson plan extract from Madam Iris

- | |
|--|
| <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Teacher reviews the forms of regular and irregular past tense verbs.2. Students read a passage from the textbook individually.3. They underline all the past tense verb they find.4. Teacher gives a worksheet with fill-in-the-blank sentences from the passage.5. Students complete the worksheet on their own, filling in the blanks with the correct form of the past tense.7. Teacher discusses the correct answers and write on the whiteboard, and students check their work.8. Students are assigned to write a short narrative using at least ten past tense verbs from a provided list. |
|--|

(Iris, Lesson Plan, October 10, 2023)

Figure 30 shows a lesson plan excerpt from one of Madam Iris' lessons. The focus of the lesson is language awareness (grammar) and from the lesson plan that she had developed it could be seen that despite the lesson looks organised it lacked the development of communicative competence among students as the opportunities to use the language for real world context.

The grammar lesson is prepared in a traditional drilling style without opportunities for students to develop their communicative competence. Despite these aspects were covered in the cascade training it was not reflected in the practice. Next, the lesson in Figure 31 is an extract from Madam Tulips' lesson plan:

Figure 31

Lesson plan extract from Madam Tulips

- a) Teacher explains the reading passage activity.
- b) Students refer to page 44 in the Full Blast textbook with a reading passage.
- c) They read the passage silently and individually.
- d) After reading, students complete the answer for activity B.
- e) Teacher discusses the answers.
- f) Students then answer vocabulary question based on the passage.
- g) Teacher discusses the answers.
- h) Students are then directed to the objective questions and they answer the questions
- i) Teacher ask students for answers and explains the answers
- j) Teacher summarises the lesson and students are to complete grammar exercise on page 45.

(Tulips, Lesson Plan 3, October 5, 2023)

The extract from Madam Tulips' lesson plan is prepared for a reading lesson. The lesson plan shows lack interactive elements in the lesson. Besides, the lesson seems to be teacher-centred. Moreover, the lesson plan also focuses on one skill which is reading skill instead of two skills as required in the curriculum scheme of work (SOW). The focus of the lesson is a reading lesson, but the homework given is a grammar task which was not covered in the lesson. Next, Miss Cempaka's lesson plan excerpt is shown in Figure 32 is based on a form four speaking lesson.

Figure 32

Lesson Plan Extract from Madam Cempaka

- a. Teacher explains the topic to be discussed.
- b. Teacher introduces the dialogue topic related to the task.
- c. Students asked to turn to page 56.
- d. Teacher gives dialogues to the students, for them to practice.
- e. Teacher picks two students to read aloud and demonstrate to the class.
- f. Students listen silently, following along with the notes given to them.
- g. Students talk to their pairs using the notes given.
- h. Teacher discusses the pronunciation of certain words in the notes given.
- i. Students practice speaking with their partner using the sample script given.
- j. Teacher walks around to correct the students' pronunciation.
- k. Teacher give comment on the lesson
- l. Students are to practice the dialogue at home.

(Miss Cempaka, Lesson Plan 2, August 24, 2023)

Similar to Madam Iris and Madam Tulips' lessons activities, the activities designed by Miss Cempaka is also teacher-centred and is teacher-controlled despite it being a speaking lesson. Though the activities provided room for interaction, it was very controlled and limited to what the teacher has prepared for the students and no opportunity to further exploration. The lesson is organised with a proper flow but then lacks the communicative elements and lack autonomy for students to explore the topic further in the discussion. The lesson is very much controlled by the teacher.

The subtheme 'hands-on training and practical application' within the cascade training has identified the misalignment between the curriculum requirements within the communicative competence through action-oriented approach and the practical application within the classroom boundaries. In general, it could be seen that teachers have expressed the need for more practical activities in the training to understand the curriculum better for classroom implementation which would allow them to understand better lesson planning, development and activities that integrates with real-world context and student-centred. Perhaps due to lack of exposure in practical applications during the cascade training would have led their lesson plans to reflect a shortfall in interactive student activities and incorporating communicative competence. The teachers' lesson plans reflect teacher-centredness with limited autonomy for students to explore their learning and lack of use of language for real-world use. This is an indication of the existence of a gap in the cascade training's ability to equip teachers with the necessary tools that would build their confidence level to implement lessons which are student-centred with focus on developing communicative competence. This subtheme shows that there is a need for making the

cascade training to have more hands-on activities in preparing for lessons with diverse group of students.

4.5.2.2. Classroom Assessment

The subtheme ‘classroom assessment’ explores the area of how teachers carry out classroom assessments in the curriculum implementation process. Classroom assessments are vital in curriculum implementation as it does not only measure students’ learning but also enable teachers to reflect and get informed on their own teaching practices based on students’ ability to use the language in the target language where the four language skills are concerned. Classroom assessments that match curriculum requirements on developing communicative competence through action-oriented approach able to ensure effectiveness of learning and develop students’ language proficiency.

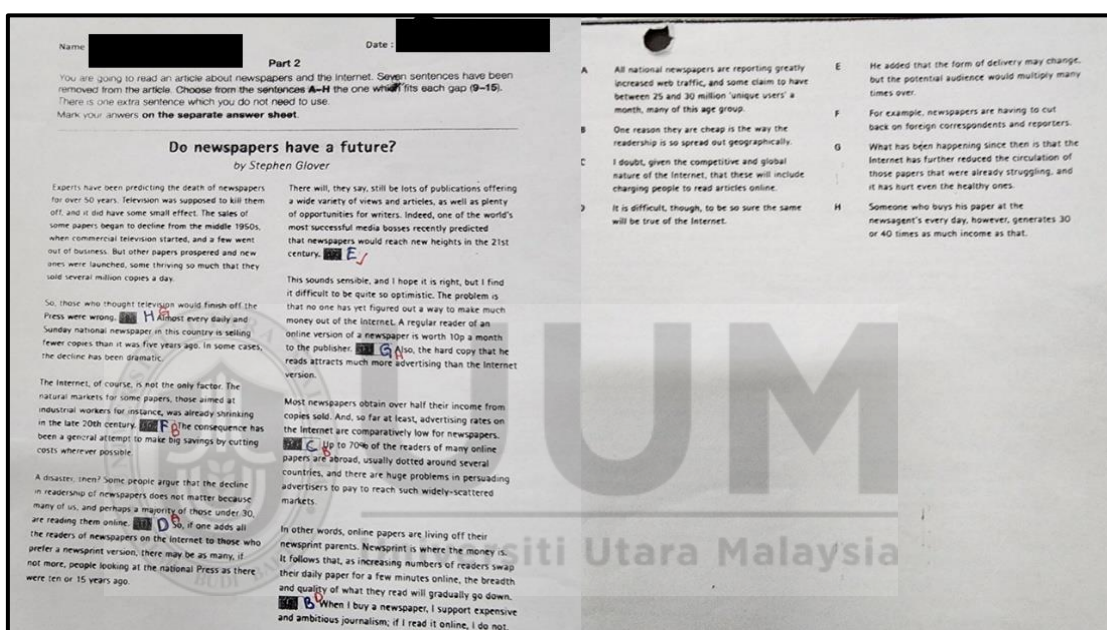
The teachers in this study have incorporated the various styles of assessments in their lessons which reflect their understanding of carrying out such assessments in their lessons. This subtheme is developed based on the teachers’ interviews post their lessons and the worksheets that they used for their lessons.

This subtheme is discussed based on the understanding that have been displayed by Mr. Lim, Madam Jasmine, and Madam Iris on how they had carried out their classroom assessments that would provide us the insights on the need for training enhancement when the CEFR-aligned cascade training is concerned.

Figure 33, is Mr. Lim's worksheet that he had used in his lesson as a post-reading homework task. The worksheet contains a reading practice similar to one of the components in the Sijil Pelajaran Malaysia (SPM) English language reading test. Mr. Lim stated that this worksheet was taken from the Cambridge English sample First Certificate English (FCE) English reading test paper.

Figure 33

A worksheet from Mr. Lim's reading lesson



Mr. Lim stated that:

“...along with the textbook activities, I also give worksheets for practice similar to the SPM examination format to help students to get familiarise with the examination format. Ermmm....If I do reading I will give one or two extra practices for students’ to practise.

(Lim, Interview 2, October 5, 2023)

The worksheet shown in Figure 33 is an FCE level sample test paper, where the language level is set as upper intermediate level B2, while the task in the form 5 textbooks is levelled at B1. Despite given as homework, the level of the worksheet used by Mr. Lim is higher compared to the level the lesson in the textbook taught to the students. If this is the form of assessment used to assess students’ understanding

of the lesson, there is a mismatch between the level taught by the teacher and the level assessed as homework. The mismatch of levels and providing task of higher difficulties is noticeably practised by other teachers too. Looking into the task sheet that Madam Jasmine used in her lesson, it is found that she used worksheets from international reference books to give practice to the students related to the unit or topic she is teaching. However, it is noticed that the worksheet that she used in her classroom is beyond the level that she supposed to build, the task sheet that she used are levelled at C1 mid but the level that she was supposed to teach was level B1 Mid: the form four students. Figure 34 shows the worksheet that Madam Jasmine used in her lesson. Madam Jasmine explained that the worksheet that she gave her students are given as such for several reasons, the this is what she said about the worksheet she used in her lesson:

“...hurmmm....I think that this work is aligned with what I taught in the lesson. My lesson is on social media, and I got a reading practice related to social media. hurmmm...the practice is actually a little higher level as I want my students to learn more difficult vocabulary and higher-level sentence structure from this practice...”
(Jasmine, Interview 2, September 07, 2023)

Figure 34

A worksheet from Madam Jasmine's reading lesson

Your Opinion: Social networking sites

A. Alicia, 16
I relish the opportunity to utilize social networking sites to maintain connections with my companions and reliable friendships from years past. To my delight, I recently reconnected with a childhood confidant from primary school. Social networking platforms also facilitate altruistic endeavours. I observed on a friend's profile that someone was in dire need of a diving instructor. My uncle, a proficient instructor, happens to be on the same platform. Upon introducing them, they expressed their mutual gratitude. My parents often criticize my penchant for online gaming with peers, but I staunchly oppose their viewpoint. Engaging in trivia word games and chess captivates my intellect and provides an educational experience, nullifying any potential drawbacks.

B. Adrian, 16
I harbour reservations about the utility of social networking sites. The prospect of divulging excessive personal information on the web is disconcerting, as it paves the way for unsolicited emails and malicious software. Cyberbullying, a pervasive and insidious phenomenon, has driven a friend of mine to abandon a popular platform. Additionally, identity theft remains a pressing concern, as malicious individuals could masquerade as me to perpetrate nefarious acts.

C. Rayyan, 15
While I seldom indulge in social networking, I concede that its merits are occasionally apparent. The incessant compulsion to update one's status slides, etc. I have little interest in the minutiae of other's lives. However, when coordinating events, such platforms prove invaluable. Currently, my school is organizing a play, and social networking has expedited our efforts in ticket sales and promotion. Our dedicated page facilitates publicity and, post-event, will serve as a repository for photographic and video highlights.

D. Emma, 14
Although I am an active participant on a social networking site, I am contemplating terminating my involvement. The platform has increasingly encroached upon my personal life, as I devote countless hours to virtual games and social interactions with a vast array of acquaintances. The digital preoccupation has detracted from my real-life experiences. To exacerbate matters, my mother, who has joined the same platform, constantly monitors my online activity. This invasion of privacy is utterly mortifying and may ultimately be the catalyst for my departure from the site.

Task: Identify the unfamiliar words in the given text and consult your textbook to find their meanings.

Complete the table below with information obtained from the text on page 8 in your textbook.

	Opinion	Reason
Alicia, 16	Social networking sites are useful for helping people.	play knowledge games.
Adrian, 16	Social networking sites is dangerous, giving negative affect.	sending viruses or spam.
Rayyan, 15	using a social networking sites makes it a lot easier.	because got our own page to ad.
Emma, 14	giving up on using social networking sites.	because her mother monitor Emma.

From the text identify some of the advantages and disadvantages of using social networking sites. List them in the table below. Discuss your answers with a partner.

Advantages	Disadvantages
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> reconnect with friends with year past can help people through social networking sites useful for parents easy to organize events facilitate altruistic endeavours helping in education 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> devote countless hours to virtual games sending viruses and spam compared pretend to be someone and commit crime cyberbullying detracted from real-life experiences social interactions with a variety of acquaintances

C. You have explored the words below, while reading the text. Construct sentences using the words below.

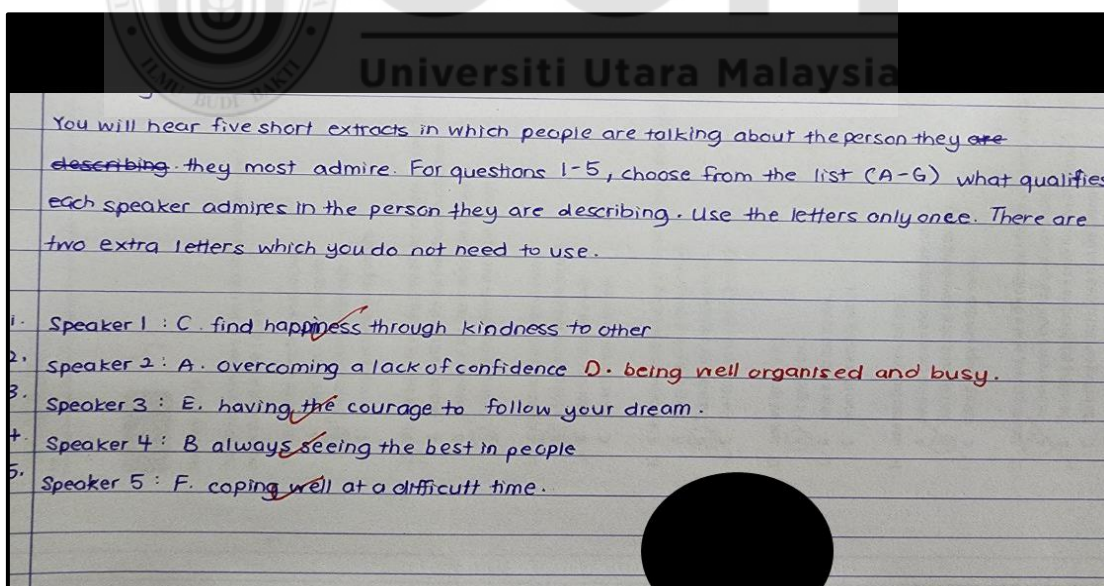
- drawback: One of the drawbacks of social networking sites is that everyone can see once they log into your site.
- nasty: Mom thinks cyberbullying is a nasty action.
- constantly: The notification on my Instagram page is constantly showing up.
- update: The social networking site like Facebook always updates the recent happenings.
- highlight: I will post my funny events to highlight.
- deactivating: I've been thinking about deactivating my Instagram account after recession.

Madam Jasmine have had the language level misaligned in the practice sheet that she had picked for her students. The worksheet that she used, instead of assessing students' ability to comprehend and develop reading skills that she has taught the students, is challenging the students and it may burden the students who may have difficulty to understand the task in the practice sheet. This practice may have impact on students' motivation in language learning.

Moving on to Madam Iris, for her lesson focussing on listening skills, she did not use any worksheets. Instead, she just made students to complete the task in the textbook. Figure 35 shows a copy of students' work copied from the textbook for the listening task that she did with her students:

Figure 35

A worksheet from Madam Iris' listening lesson



Madam Iris stated that the practice in the textbook was enough for the lesson:

"...I don't normally prepare extra worksheets, I feel whatever given in the textbook is enough and I won't like go off track from the syllabus since I'm using the textbook..."

(Iris, Interview 2, October 17, 2023)

Madam Iris' teaching approach involve using tasks that are provided from the textbook without the use of any extra supplementary materials or worksheets. She believes that the textbook provides sufficient task for the students. Her approach reflects her reliance towards the textbook as perhaps the main source of content for her lesson and also her own preference towards textbook which makes it easy for her.

The teachers' guided reflections further show that the strategies for their classroom practices such as formative assessment practices, providing feedback, peer-assessment, self-assessment and differentiation strategies were very vaguely carried out in some of their lessons despite all these strategies have been clearly outlined in the SOW and have also been explored during the cascade training on CEFR formative assessment strategies.

Mr. Lim, despite being an experienced teacher still gives importance to examination based practice in his classroom as part of the assessment in his lesson:

" I integrate my classroom assessment with the SPM examination format practice for students to understand the SPM format better.... "
(Lim, Guided reflection, September 29, 2023)

Miss Lilly is the only teacher who has attempted differentiation in her lessons to help students with diversified language proficiency levels:

"My worksheets and instructions are same for all the students. But when I group them, I put them according to their levels, so that they could do work as a group."
(Lilly, Guided reflection, September 09, 2023)

On the other hand, Madam Iris, in her guided reflection felt that the self and peer-assessment strategies will not work in the Malaysian classroom setting as she feels that students may not do it seriously.

“I think doing self-assessment and peer-assessment won’t work with Malaysian students, they are very playful, they won’t do seriously so I don’t do this in my classroom”

(Iris, Guided reflection, October 13, 2023)

The subtheme ‘classroom assessment’ underscores the practice of carrying out classroom assessments within the scopes of learning where it depicts a spectrum of assessment approaches from structured exam-oriented assessment to classroom assessment based on worksheets. It was also found that teachers’ also carryout ambitious practices where students are given worksheets which are beyond the level they are supposed to explore. Teachers’ interview, teaching and learning materials as well as their guided reflections reveal that there is a potential gap between the cascade training and their classroom application practices which suggest the need for improving training for better understanding of the curriculum. The theme enhancing training for better curriculum understanding identifies the gaps that are critical in the effectiveness of cascade training to a certain extent in terms of methods of assessment and classroom practices that are falling short of the communicative goals underlined by the CEFR-aligned English language curriculum.

Teachers’ reflections, lesson plans, teaching and learning materials as well as their guided reflections suggest a need for an enhancement in the cascade training with more interactive, hands-on training that would allow teachers with a practical application of the curriculum. In addition, assessment practices remain exam-oriented, paper-based written activities and mismatch of students’ proficiency level in classroom activities, underscore the need for enhanced cascade training for a better understanding of the curriculum.

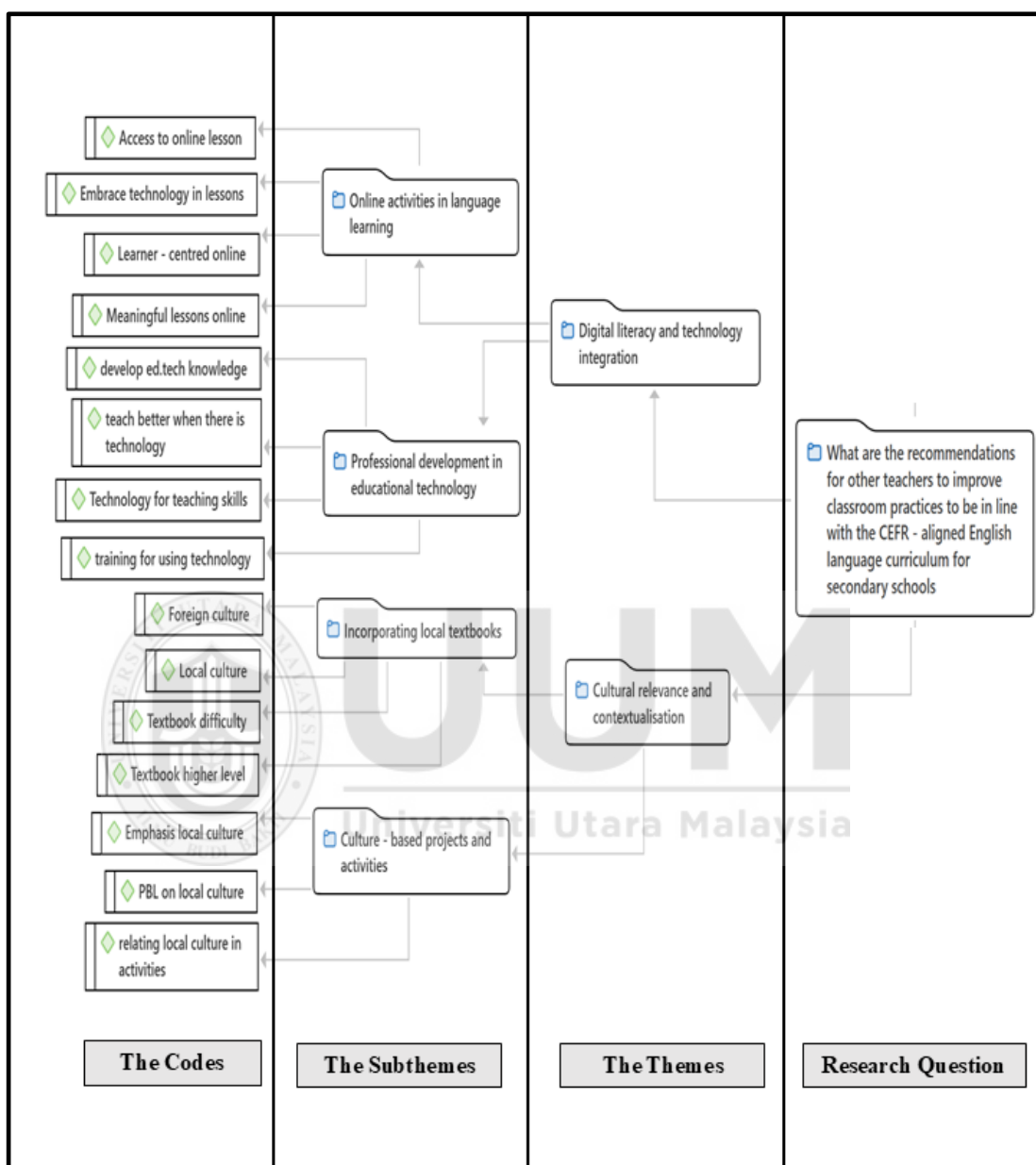
4.6 Research Question 4: What are the Recommendations for Other Teachers to Improve Classroom Practices to Be in Line With the CEFR-aligned English Language Curriculum for Secondary Schools?

In the quest to provide more recommendations for teachers to further enhance their teaching practices, this study further looks into teachers' interviews and their classroom practices through interviews and guided reflections on the recommendations that can be suggested to improve classroom practices within the context of the CEFR-aligned English language curriculum.

This inquiry is supported through two themes: 'digital literacy and technology integration', and 'cultural relevance and contextualisation'. By exploring these themes, it is intended to provide rich contextually grounded and practical strategies for teachers to enhance their classroom practices promoting communicative competence through action-oriented approach in line with the CEFR-aligned English language curriculum. Figure 36 is the diagramme that shows the formation of all the themes through the codes and subthemes that led to the formation of the two themes that provided answers to the research question.

Figure 36

Thematic analysis for the recommendations for teachers to improve classroom practices to be in line with the CEFR-aligned English language curriculum for secondary schools.



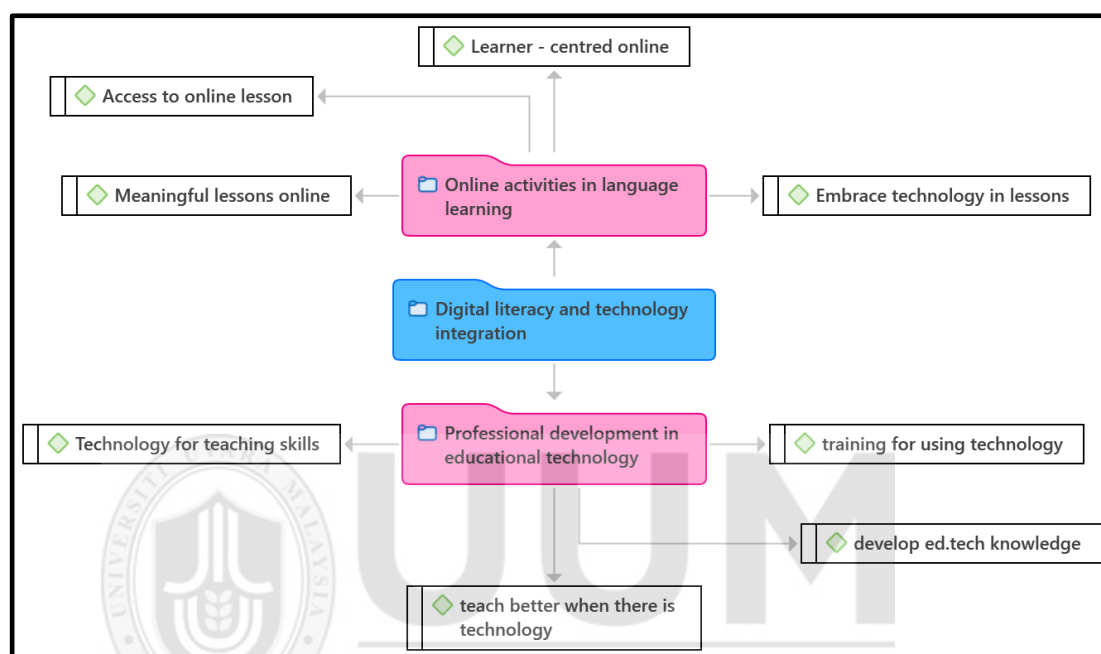
4.6.1 Theme 1: Digital Literacy and Technology Integration

The theme ‘digital literacy and technology integration’ navigates into teachers’ recommendation on improving the teaching and learning and practices within the realm of the CEFR-aligned English language curriculum with the aid of technology. As shown in Figure 37 on the next page, this theme is divided into two subthemes;

‘online activities in language learning’ and ‘professional development in education technology’ to provide a detailed picture of teachers’ aspirations in improving teaching practices with the aid of digital technology.

Figure 37

Theme 1: Digital literacy and technology integration



4.6.1.1 Online Activities in Language Learning

The subtheme ‘online activities in language learning’ looks into recommendations that teachers provide on improving classroom practices using technology aided tools that would make teaching and learning more meaningful. Teachers through their interviews and guided reflections suggested that online activities in language learning is one way to improve classroom practices and make the implementation of the CEFR-aligned English language curriculum for secondary schools more meaningful. Madam Jasmine feels that there is a need for teachers to embrace technology in teaching the English language. She suggested that teachers need to integrate technology in their lessons whenever it is possible:

“...we should embrace technology in our lessons,.aaah...there are so many digital resources and tools available that can help students learn English in engaging and interactive ways, you know. We should try to integrate technology whenever possible...”

(Jasmine, Interview 1, August 25, 2023)

While Madam Jasmine was suggesting integration of technology in lessons, Mr. Lim finds it very challenging with limited access to technology at school. He also finds it difficult to even provide homework online for students as some of his students do not have access to either gadgets or internet.

“I think this lesson would have been more meaningful, If I had opportunity to use technology in my classroom, I am unable to provide access to all the students so I can’t use quizzizz or Edpuzzle to make the reading lesson more interactive in the classroom. Giving as homework is also a trouble as not all students have access to internet and gadgets at home.”

(Lim, Guided reflection, September 29, 2023)

While Mr. Lim finds it difficult to bring technology into classrooms, Mr. Adham feels that technology is one of the effective ways to promote learner-centredness in classrooms. He also further added that, integrating technology in classroom makes things easier for teachers in terms of classroom management as well as teaching and learning, which is why he suggested that teachers should use more online tools to make teaching and learning more meaningful.

“...Okay one way to promote learner-centredness is by giving assignments through online activities like online games, I did it during MCO, but the now since face to face it’s difficult, but I find doing task online easy for teachers’ okay.. to check students work and can keep record in google classroom,.....and. there are also a lot of tools on Delima portal that teachers can use, hurmmm....teachers should use this online tool to make learning more meaningful for their students...”

(Adham, Interview 2, October 03, 2023)

The interviews and reflections from Madam Jasmine, Mr. Lim and Mr. Adham emphasise the role of technology in improving language learning in the implementation of the CEFR-aligned curriculum for secondary schools. The other

teachers have also given similar responses on the use of technology be it the challenges or suggestions. They collectively recommend for the integration of online learning and digital tools to make learning more interactive, engaging and student-centred. Despite the limitations, teachers acknowledge the importance of integration of technology in curriculum implementation that they highly recommend it for improved classroom practices.

4.6.1.2 Professional Development in Educational Technology

The subtheme ‘Professional development in educational technology’ emphasises on the importance of equipping teachers with the skills and knowledge on the effective use of digital tools for teaching from the lenses of teachers who have experienced it and make modifications in curriculum implementation by integrating technology in their lessons. For example, Mr. Adham who has been part in various initiatives to improve the use of technology in his classrooms felt that teachers should attend educational technology courses like him to improve their teaching skills:

“...okay...I have been an expert Microsoft innovative educator and becoming one helps me to make my lessons more interesting and engaging, so I suggest teachers should take up educational technology courses like this to improve their teaching skills and learn skills to integrate the English language lessons with technology...”

(Adham, Interview 1, September 20, 2023)

Just like how Mr. Adham suggested for educational technology courses, Madam Tulips and Madam Iris feels that teachers including them should be sent for more courses on integrating educational technology in English language teaching to make their teaching and learning process more meaningful:

I hope I can attend more training on using technology to teach all the four skills, so that I can teach better using technology

(Tulips, Guided reflection, October 5, 2023)

“...teachers should be sent for more course for using technology for their lessons, this will help them to prepare their lessons better and teach better using technology...”

(Iris, Interview 1, September 29, 2023)

On the other hand, Miss Lilly, who has limited knowledge on technology for teaching and learning yearns for such knowledge and opportunities to use them in classroom for a more meaningful and successful teaching and learning:

“...I think this lesson would be better if I can use technology tool to get students doing the activities in class...”

(Lilly, Interview 2, September 06, 2023)

The interviews and guided reflections from teachers suggest that improving teachers' skills and knowledge in using digital tools can bring about impact towards quality of teaching and learning of the English language. The inputs from Mr. Adham, Madam Tulips, Madam Iris and Miss Lilly recommends for a more specialised training for teachers to integrate technology in curriculum implementation for a more technologically enhanced classroom practice.

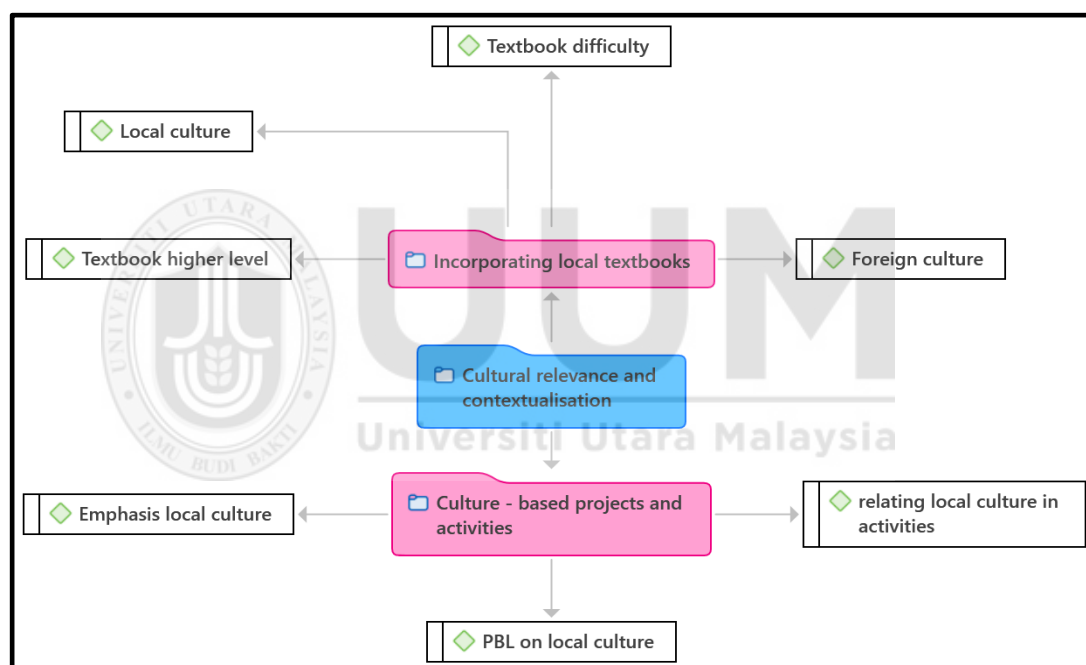
The theme 'digital literacy and technology integration' is enriched with insights and recommendations from teachers in improving classroom practices among teachers in line with the CEFR-aligned English language curriculum for secondary schools. The open-ended interviews and reflections emphasised on embracing digital tools and online activities to improve classroom practices among teachers. The recommendation to integrate digital literacy and technology will not only improvise curriculum implementation with the CEFR standards but also prepare students' to be digitally connected to the world.

4.6.2 Theme 2 : Cultural Relevance and Contextualisation

The theme ‘cultural relevance and contextualisation’ looks into recommendations of teachers requesting the integration of local culture in the implementation of the CEFR-aligned English language curriculum. This theme is further divided into two subthemes; ‘incorporating local culture in textbook’ and ‘culture-based projects and activities’ as shown in Figure 38.

Figure 38

Theme 2: Cultural relevance and contextualisation



4.6.2.1 Incorporating Local Culture in Textbook

The subtheme ‘incorporating local culture in textbooks’ emerge from recommendation from teachers who suggested that the textbooks used for teaching and learning to include more local content rather than foreign content as it would make learning more relatable and meaningful to students in developing their language skills. Teachers in the interviews and guided reflections expressed the need for a more localised content

for curriculum implementation to improve their classroom practices. Madam Mawar finds it difficult to deal with the foreign contents in the textbook as she finds it difficult for her students to understand them:

“I think my lesson would have been much easier to convey to the students if the ideas in the textbook are localised ideas. The language is already foreign and making the textbook with foreign content makes it difficult for weak students to develop their language competency as they don’t have the background knowledge.”

(Mawar, Guided reflection, September 21, 2023)

For Mr. Adham, his students can’t cope with the contents in the textbook as they find it difficult. Mr. Adham further feels that the foreign content of the textbook further exacerbates the issue of lack of interest and language mastery among his students:

“...Okay I think the textbook like I said to you before, the form one textbook, my students, they don't like the form one textbook because to them, all the things inside the textbook are unfamiliar. it is actually of a higher level to them...”

(Adham, Interview 2, October 03, 2023)

While Mr. Adham and Madam Mawar felt that the foreign content hampers students’ motivation and interest in mastering the language skills, Madam Jasmine tries to adapt the ideas in the textbook and create a more localised content which she feels easy for her students to relate to:

“...In one of my speaking lessons in textbook I changed a little and asked the students to talk about local festivals....they could relate it and show interest in the discussion...”

(Jasmine, Interview 2, September 07, 2023)

The subtheme ‘incorporating local culture in textbooks’ as seen in the open-ended interviews and guided reflections of the teachers Madam Mawar, Mr. Adham and Madam Jasmine, accentuates the impact of localised content in the teaching and learning practices that made a difference in students’ responses. Teachers integrated local festivals and focussed on more culturally closed topics for discussion able to

connect more deeply and use the target language to communicate. Hence, the recommendation of localising textbook content has been brought forth.

4.6.2.2 Culture-based Projects and Activities

The subtheme ‘culture-based projects and activities’ explores the recommendations given by teachers on including activities and projects that are related to local culture in English language teaching and learning practices. This is for a more effective teaching and learning practices in the quest to develop students’ communicative competence in line with the requirements of the CEFR-aligned English language curriculum.

Madam Iris feels that local culture has a lot to offer in the field of English language education in Malaysia and feels that teachers should carry out more project-based learning activities based on local culture. As someone who has experimented it in her own class, she finds her students are more engaged and interested doing projects based on local culture.

“...errrrmmm... I asked my students to prepare a project, a scrapbook on Holiday Destinations in Malaysia and do a presentation in pairs. I can see the students were more interested and enthusiastic...”
(Iris, Interview 1, September 29, 2023)

During Miss Lilly’s lesson on music, upon completion of the reading task on rap music, she continued with a discussion session on local music and singers which sparked her students’ interest. They were eager to share or talk about their favourite singer or songs. It was something close to their heart and something that they could relate to that sparked their interest to be more active in their lessons:

“After doing the activities for the reading lesson on rap music, I started discussion on local music and artists, I saw more students wanting to talk and explain about their favourite singers. So, we have

to do like this with our students, so they are more connected to our lessons when we include local culture or issues”

(Lilly, Guided reflection, September 09, 2023)

Like other teachers, Madam Mawar too has tried her way of incorporating local contents in lessons which she finds her students were more engaging and interested :

“...When I do PBL projects with my studentskan, hurmmm.... the topic will always be about local interest, for example local food, local festivals, local personality. These are within the reach of the students’ and they can easily find information and can understand it better compared to international contents which need more time to explore and understand especially for the weaker students...so we need to have more local content and projects in our lessons...”

(Mawar, Interview 1, September 18, 2023)

The subtheme ‘culture-based projects and activities’ explores the recommendations provided by the teachers to have activities and do projects that are related to the local content so students interest and enthusiasm will increase as experienced in the lessons of Madam Iris, Miss Lilly and Madam Mawar. The culture-centric approaches make lesson more relatable especially for low proficiency learners to develop their communicative competence. Hence, it is recommended for teachers to include culture-based projects and activities to improve their classroom practices.

The theme ‘cultural relevance and contextualisation’ highlights the recommendations from teachers on localising textbook and classroom activities in terms of contents. The emphasis on cultural inclusion in textbooks and classroom activities and projects enriches students’ language learning experiences as they are to relate something familiar in the target language to achieve communicative achievement. Hence, teachers recommend inclusion of local content and culture into the textbooks as to improve classroom practices to achieve the goals set by the CEFR-aligned English language curriculum.

4.7 Summary

This chapter presents evidence derived from sub-themes and themes identified through an iterative process of thematic analysis. The analysis continued until the saturation point was reached, ensuring a comprehensive exploration of the data. This chapter provided verbatim from the participants of this study with statements from interviews. It was further supported by guided reflections which was teachers' writeup on the lesson that they had carried out to provide a picture of their understanding of curriculum implementation. The data collected was further substantiated by documents such as lesson plans and students' worksheets or practices. In the next chapter, the discussion will be based on the findings via the main themes of this chapter which will answer the research questions for this study.



CHAPTER FIVE

DISCUSSION, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

5.1 Introduction

In this chapter, the focus shifts to an in-depth discussion of the findings illustrated in Chapter Four. The findings in this study attempts to address the research questions based on the analysis of the data by focussing on identifying the patterns emerging from the thematic analysis as proposed by Clarke and Braun (2017). The discussion of the findings will be followed by the conclusions of the study that would revisit the themes of this study. This chapter will provide some practical recommendations as prospective studies in the future. This chapter will also furnish some strategies to improve the cascade training and classroom practices among teachers for better curriculum implementation in regard to the implementation of the CEFR-aligned English language curriculum.

5.2 Summary of the Findings

This study aimed to explore Malaysian secondary school teachers' understanding of the implementation of the CEFR-aligned English Language Curriculum. The findings reveal a complex picture of how teachers comprehend and enact the curriculum in their classrooms. Teachers' understanding and practices varied significantly, influenced by their training experiences, classroom contexts, and individual capabilities.

A key finding was the diversity in teachers' understanding of the curriculum. While some teachers demonstrated strong comprehension by effectively aligning their lesson objectives with the curriculum's Content Standards (CS) and Learning Standards (LS),

others struggled with this alignment. Teachers with a deeper understanding attributed their success to comprehensive training sessions and supportive trainers. On the other hand, those with foundational knowledge cited the training's rushed nature, limited practical application, and trainers' insufficient expertise as barriers.

The impact of cascade training on lesson implementation was another critical theme. Teachers who embraced the principles of the CEFR framework integrated student-centred approaches, communicative teaching, and real-world language applications into their lessons. These practices aligned closely with action-oriented approach and the curriculum's objectives, fostering active student engagement and communicative competence. However, challenges persisted in low-proficiency classrooms, where teachers often reverted to traditional, teacher-centred practices due to students' limited motivation, proficiency, and engagement. Additionally, the complexity of textbooks and lack of resources further compounded these challenges, particularly in suburban and rural settings.

The efficacy of cascade training in preparing teachers for curriculum implementation was found to be inconsistent. While some teachers reported significant improvements in their professional practices, others highlighted critical shortcomings in the training structure. Many teachers stated that, the lack of hands-on application during the sessions and insufficient post-training support. Despite these issues, teachers acknowledged that the training contributed to their professional development and provided at least a basic understanding of the curriculum.

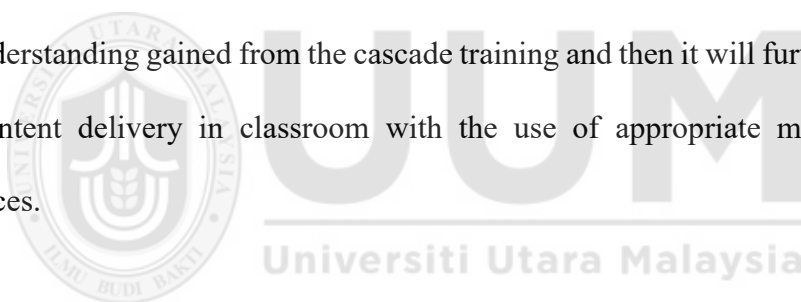
Persistent challenges, such as teacher-centred and exam-oriented practices, were also identified. These practices, while less dominant than in the previous curriculum, continued to influence teaching approaches, driven by systemic constraints and stakeholder expectations. This tension highlights the need for a cultural shift towards prioritising skills-based, communicative learning over examination-focused education.

Finally, the findings underline the need for significant improvements in cascade training and curriculum support. Teachers suggested phased training programmes to allow gradual understanding, the inclusion of hands-on practice, and mechanisms for sustained post-training mentorship. They also emphasised on the importance of incorporating local cultural elements into teaching materials to make lessons more relatable and engaging for students. Furthermore, the need for simplified modules and differentiated strategies to support low-proficiency learners was underscored, alongside calls for accessible, cost-free digital resources to enhance teaching practices.

In short, the study highlights the variability in teachers' understanding and practices, reflecting the inconsistent effectiveness of cascade training. While many teachers are moving towards the CEFR framework's objectives, challenges remain in ensuring uniformity and effectiveness in curriculum implementation. These findings provide valuable insights for refining training programmes, supporting teachers, and advancing English language education in Malaysia. The next part of this chapter will discuss the findings by relating them to the themes from the study and also its relevancy to the current literature.

5.3 Teachers' Understanding of the Implementation of the CEFR-aligned English Language Curriculum for Secondary Schools through the Cascade Trainings that They have Attended

This section explores the understanding that the Malaysian secondary school teachers have regarding the implementation of the English language curriculum that is aligned with the CEFR framework, focussing on the influence that cascade trainings have in developing teachers' understanding of the curriculum implementation. This part of the discussion delves into the extent of teachers' understanding of the curriculum based on the themes that emerged from the data analysis. The discussion will look into teachers' understanding of curriculum implementation from aligning lessons to the curriculum documents to lesson development. The discussion part will also explore on the understanding gained from the cascade training and then it will further explore into the content delivery in classroom with the use of appropriate methodology and resources.



5.3.1. Understanding the Curriculum Implementation through Lesson Development

The findings of the study revealed that in terms of understanding of the CEFR-aligned curriculum teachers in their narrations have displayed a spectrum of understandings where their approaches and depth of understanding of the curriculum have a distinct variation. The variation in their understanding is exemplified through their contrasting teacher experiences which differs among the teachers.

Firstly, it is important to look at teachers' understanding of the curriculum implementation in terms of aligning their lesson objectives with curriculum documents

such as the scheme of work, textbook and other curriculum documents. The ability to align the lesson objectives with curriculum document while planning a lesson is an indication and the first sign that shows how deeply and intrinsically teachers have understood the essence and objectives of the curriculum (Zarazoga et al., 2024). Furthermore, the progression of the lesson plan which is aligned with the Content Standard (CS) and Learning Standard (LS) reflects teachers' understanding of the lesson development process (Farel & Ashcraft, 2024). These elements had been explored in the cascade training and teachers understanding of the curriculum can be begun with their ability to develop lesson plans based on the SOW and other prescribed curriculum documents (Cambridge English language Assessment, 2017).

In this study, some teachers have shown outstanding adeptness in aligning their lesson objectives with curriculum documents such as the scheme of work, textbook and other curriculum documents which they attributed to the cascade training. The lesson plans demonstrate the shift towards student-centred and innovative in nature with the inclusion of real-world language applications, developing creative thinking and promoting more interaction among students in line with the objectives of the CEFR-aligned English language curriculum. The development of the lesson and strategies stated are all adhering to the principles of the action-oriented approach outlined in the CEFR framework.

Despite teachers having displayed excellent understanding of the curriculum implementation in lesson development and preparation through their lesson objectives, there are also teachers who are struggling to align their lesson plans with the Learning Standards (LS) and Content Standards (CS) to develop lessons that are relevant

throughout. This is despite having attended the cascade training and claiming that they have understood the training well. Subconsciously, these teachers think that they are doing it right but then it is not reflected in their lesson plans. Uri et al., (2023), Thiagarajan and Hua (2023), Gopal et al. (2023), Alih et al. (2021), and Sulaiman (2022) stated that teachers lack understanding of the cascade training have led them to unable to implement the curriculum effectively.

Teachers lack understanding in lesson development process shows how much they are lacking in understanding the curriculum. The display of teachers' diverse understanding of the curriculum implementation shows the nature of curriculum implementation. This also shows how critical is the role of the training in making teachers understand the curriculum and its implementation.

5.3.2 Impact of the Cascade Training in Improving Teachers' Understanding of the Curriculum in Lesson Development

Teachers who have really internalised the content of the curriculum through the cascade training have stated that their classroom practices have seen remarkable changes in terms of their lesson development due to better understanding of the curriculum. These improvements could be seen in their lesson development ensuring the objectives of the lessons are aligned with the Content Standard (CS) and Learning Standard (LS). Some exemplary work that could be seen among the teachers are the inclusion of student-centred activities in their lesson plans. Teachers' lesson plans show a shift towards more collaborative and interactive as well as promoting social interaction as envisaged in action-oriented approach aligning their lessons with the

requirement of the curriculum. Teachers have also displayed a grasp in developing realistic and measurable objectives in developing their lesson plans.

Teachers' in their narratives attributed various factors to their understanding of the curriculum that they have displayed through the development of their lessons. Firstly, they attributed their understanding to the cascade training for providing comprehensive understanding of the curriculum and how to plan a lesson based on the documents prescribed by the ministry. Secondly, they also narrated that, the support that they have received during the training sessions from the trainers were another reason for them to have a good grasp of their understanding of the curriculum and knowledge on developing lessons that align with the curriculum. The findings from the teachers' narratives are not similar with Sahra (2024) and Bayoung and Hashim (2023) as in their studies they found that teachers despite attending the training had difficulties in having the grasp of the curriculum and need to rely on other source to grasp the understanding in developing their lessons. Teacher's ability to develop the lessons well is as required in the English Language Education Roadmap 2015-2025 and the CEFR framework.

Although a number of teachers in this study have described their understanding of lesson development and relating it to the cascade training, there are also the experiences of some of the teachers who are struggling with the understanding of lesson development and have shared conflicting views on the cascade training. Though they had attended multiple cascade training sessions these teachers struggled to align their lesson objectives with curriculum standards. One of the reasons of their inability to understand is due to their lack of understanding from the training itself and the

trainers being not well-versed in the curriculum. The teachers were unable to comprehend the curriculum could also be due to the individual differences on previous pedagogical knowledge, experiences, as well as the ability to receive new knowledge. The struggles and challenges stated by the teachers are similar to the findings discussed by Hiew (2022), Uri and Aziz (2018), Bayoung and Hashim (2023), Kaur and Jian (2022), and Sahra (2024). While the cascade training has been able to develop teachers' understanding of the curriculum in lesson development, its effectiveness and impact has been varied among individual teachers which reflects what has been informed by Hiew (2022), Marzaini et al., (2023), Uri (2023), Ng and Ahmad, (2021) and Ong (2022) on the issues teachers face from the cascade trainings.

5.3.3 Diversity in Curriculum Implementation in Delivering the Content

Teachers' understanding of the CEFR-aligned English language curriculum can further be explored through the curriculum implementation strategies gained through the cascade training. These strategies are aligned in their classroom practices. In this aspect, a varied level of understanding among teachers could be observed in terms of delivering the content of the lessons which the teachers narrated through the interview and guided reflections.

On one side of the spectrum, the teachers have impressively integrated methodologies and classroom activities suggested via cascade training or made their own initiatives to look for new resources to make their lessons more meaningful. These teachers have displayed the understanding of the curriculum in depth and have started to move beyond the traditional classroom methods. These teachers came out from the comfort of using textbooks in classroom and went beyond what is required from them. For

example, through the triangulation of the data it was found that teachers are incorporating collaborative activities, project-based learning, role-playing, problem-solving activities and technology to develop language activities which are all under the roof of action-oriented approach and experiential learning aligned with the CEFR framework. These show that the teachers are more dynamic and have a holistic approach towards developing the English language skills among students. It is also important to add that, the lessons from these teachers are often featured with real-life language use scenarios, allowing opportunity for students to be more engaged in the lessons through interactions as well as the use of a myriad of learning strategies.

The understanding displayed by these teachers have led towards active student participation, making the learning of the English language more practical and engaging. These teachers also stated that they are leaning towards student-centred approach in their curriculum implementation. This is in line with the objectives of the curriculum. The shift in these lessons show the effectiveness of the cascade training in making teachers understand the importance of enabling students as active learners in a language lesson to develop the language skills.

Despite the shift mentioned above, there are also teachers in the study who seem to have a strong hold towards traditional teaching method. The conventional approach such as over-reliance to textbook and teacher-centredness show that there is an underlying issue in the teachers' classroom practices that need to be given attention. The teachers heavily rely on rote learning, grammar practices and direct instruction where these methods are not action-oriented in nature and not aligned with the principles of CEFR-aligned English language curriculum and constructivism. These

issues were also highlighted by Nii and Yunus (2022), Alih et al. (2020), Sadhasivam et al. (2023), and Lee et al. (2022).

One of the striking and emerging findings of the study is, teachers, despite having understood the curriculum and able to explain how the curriculum meant to be, are unable to implement the curriculum in a student-centred manner as it is required in classrooms where students lack the language proficiency and mother tongue takes a precedence. This happens mostly among teachers who are teaching in the suburban schools and in low proficiency classrooms. Teachers are finding it difficult to have the student-centred strategies and had to rely on teacher-centred practices to enable students to learn the English language where the teachers take effort to explain to students who are mostly passive when it comes to learning English.

They also felt the demonstrated strategies learnt during the cascade training was not practical and does not work in their classroom due to students' lack of interest and motivation to learn the English language. They also stated that the textbook given are also too advanced to their students that the students do not understand much that they take a longer time explaining the content and the meanings that they become too absorbed to the textbook. This situation is worsened when they do not get enough resources to help the low proficiency students in their classroom. Leaving them high and dry to be reliant on the textbook as the most used teaching resource in their classrooms.

Another striking finding is the cultural differences displayed in the textbook further exacerbated students' lack of motivation. Teachers who were in this spectrum stated

that the cascade training that they had attended did not really help them to address the issue that they face in teaching low proficiency students. This is because most of the instructions during the cascade training were rather done in a general manner of ‘one size fits all’.

Teachers’ understanding of the curriculum in terms of curriculum implementation significantly varies. While some teachers could successfully transform the knowledge gained through the cascade training effectively in their classroom practices with good understanding, others felt that the knowledge gained from the cascade training did not match in their real classroom environment and finding it difficult to develop the communicative competence with student-centred learning environment. The disparities need to be addressed to create a level playing field in implementing the CEFR-aligned English language curriculum in Malaysia.

Sandhakumarin and Tan, (2023), Ng and Ahmad (2021), Kadir (2022) and Yunus et al. (2023) found that while teachers often exhibit moderate familiarity with the curriculum objectives and its alignment to standards, many struggle with its practical application in diverse classroom settings. For instance, these studies have shown that although teachers recognise the relevance of CEFR to improving English language proficiency, they find its requirements are complex and challenging to translate into classroom activities. The findings of these studies have shown that the findings of the current study are relevant and the problem of teachers’ understanding of the curriculum in terms of classroom practices needs to be addressed and improved for better curriculum implementation.

5.3.4 Teachers' Understanding of the Curriculum through the Cascade

Training in Terms of Creating Meaningful Learning Experiences

The effectiveness of the cascade training in developing teachers' understanding of the curriculum in making teaching and learning more meaningful reveals a complex picture. While there are a group of teachers who could successfully create learning experiences by integrating critical thinking skills, real-world relevance and learner autonomy as part of their teaching strategies, which they credited to the cascade training, another of teachers claimed that they are facing difficulty in incorporating all the aforementioned strategies to improve their classroom practices due to lack of understanding, diverse classroom environment, different levels of students' engagement and limited resources. For example, in terms of incorporating learner autonomy in teaching and learning practices, limited teachers have understood its nuances in incorporating them in their lessons.

In terms of critical thinking skills and real-world relevance, some teachers in their narratives and reflections have shown how much they have understood and what they are expected to do. However, due to time constraint and focussing on developing students' proficiency levels, these skills and approaches are often overlooked focussing on more pressing needs in classroom such as developing literacy-speaking and writing in simple English. Studies by Nii and Yunus (2020), Alih et al. (2022), Yusoff et al. (2022), Aziz (2021) and Khair and Shah (2021) have identified teachers lack understanding, misunderstanding and inability to carry out the curriculum effectively.

What was striking and emerging in this study was teachers had to focus on other things in their classroom and some of them despite understanding the curriculum implementation, they could not implement it effectively due to the constraints that they face while helping the low proficiency students who cannot cope with the language. This is something that needs to be looked upon as some teachers may have understood the curriculum well, but due to constraints that they have may not be able to effectively implement in their teaching environments.

5.3.5 Cascade Training and Teachers' Understanding as a Whole

Based on teachers' narratives in open-ended interviews and guided reflections as well as the lesson document analyses, reveals that teachers' understanding of the curriculum gained through cascade training in terms of classroom practices is diverse. While some teachers have displayed in depth understanding, others show foundational level of understanding. This finding is also similar to Nii and Yunus (2022), Sahib and Stapa (2022), Ong (2022), Hiew (2022) and Khair and Shah (2021) where all the studies have found inconsistencies in teachers' understanding of the curriculum implementation. Some teachers find it to be very effective and fresh breathe of air while others saying it to be too theoretical and lacks in practical applications that is needed in real classroom.

Through their narratives it was found that, some teachers were able display their understanding of the curriculum by integrating the curriculum in their pedagogical practices efficiently. They also displayed teaching practices that are student-centred, focussed on developing communicative competences and innovative approaches to develop the language skills, which are in line with the CEFR framework and the

CEFR-aligned English language curriculum. Conversely, those with the foundational grasp of the knowledge still rely on traditional methods and over-reliance of textbooks, citing various reasons and shortcomings. While some teachers find the training to be comprehensive, informative, and helpful, other teachers claimed that it is overly theoretical and lacks in the practical applications that is needed in real classroom. The teachers also stated in their narratives that the cascade training was not effective due to lack of understanding among trainers themselves that affected the teachers understanding and classroom practices.

In short, it can be concluded that teachers' understanding of the curriculum implementation through the cascade training is diverse. Teachers' contrasting experiences highlight the inconsistencies in the effectiveness of the cascade training. These inconsistencies affect the development of teachers' understanding of curriculum implementation.

5.4. The Extent of Assistance the Cascade Training has Provided to Teachers in the Implementation of Their Lessons

Teachers in this study are also divided in their opinion. This is in terms of narrating their experiences on how the cascade training has helped them in the implementation of the English language lessons. This discussion explores the aspects of how much the cascade training has helped in improving the teaching and learning practices in the classrooms.

5.4.1 The Efficacy of Cascade Training

Teachers' narratives revealed that the efficacy of cascade training in improving their classroom practices to implement the CEFR-aligned English language curriculum is multifaceted. Through their stories, it is identified that some teachers find that the cascade training has been tremendously helpful in changing their classroom practices to betterment. However, other teachers claim that there are a lot of shortcomings in it that they do not see it as helpful in making their practices better.

Teachers who shared their positive views of the cascade training stated that it served as a catalyst in making teachers understand the CEFR and the new curriculum that was aligned to it. They stated that among the improvements or benefits that they gained from the cascade training was the gaining confidence in classroom practices, improved lesson management skills, adoption of effective and interesting teaching strategies. The teachers also stated that the cascade training has also improved the quality of lesson delivery in their classroom to a more student-centred practice. Teachers could handle diverse students when they are armed with the principles shared via the cascade training. The positive feedback from teachers shows that to a certain extent it has influenced teachers to improve their classroom practices aligning to the CEFR-aligned curriculum.

On the other hand, there are also teachers who felt that the training was done in a rushed manner, where it did not leave them with opportunity to gain in-depth understanding or the practical application. They found that the content of the training was largely superficial that led to a lot of problems when they moved to the execution phase. They also felt that the training did not properly prepare them to implement the

curriculum. They said that, at the end of the training, they felt very unprepared and sceptical about the effectiveness of the cascade training.

However, despite the lack of understanding of the training, teachers acknowledged that they gained at least some understanding on teaching and learning practices from the training. This understanding is something that they could practice in their classrooms despite the reservations they had. It is an indication that, though the training may not have met everybody's expectations in terms of the content, pace and delivery, it nonetheless has contributed to at least to a certain level of professional development that teachers are not left with zero knowledge of the curriculum implementation.

In relation to the finding of this study, Aziz et al. (2018), Sahib and Stapa (2022), Ong (2022), and Uri and Aziz (2018) have stated that the cascade training programmes were problematic and lack on hands-on experience for teachers. In contrast, Aziz et al. (2018) and Marziani et al. (2023a) have stated in their studies that cascade training aimed at implementing the English language curriculum for secondary schools were rather superficial and done in a rushed manner, which means similar to the findings of this study, previous studies have also identified issues in relation to the cascade training. However, this study have identified the issues more extensively the in the cascade training in terms of the content, pace and scope of the study. This would help in improving specific aspects in training and curriculum implementation.

To summarise, a picture of contrast could be seen from the findings of the study, where the cascade training despite proven to be beneficial to a certain quarter of teachers, the effectiveness is not uniformly experienced by all the teachers. This has also been

agreed in previous studies. Various factors in terms of content, pace, teachers' background, and the scope of the training to fit in their teaching environment in training plays a role in helping teachers to implement the curriculum effectively.

5.4.2 Teacher Development for Better Classroom Practices

In explaining their cascade training experiences, teachers revealed a nuanced and introspective changes in their teaching philosophies. Many of them have agreed in their narratives that their focus have been moved from the predominant teacher-centred practices and examination-focussed teaching to practices which promote interaction, engagement and communicative competence among students in developing the English language skills. The changes that the teachers' experienced are not just their teaching methods, but it helped them to redefine their teaching practices and professional identities.

Teachers' narratives indicated that these evolution among teachers were the effect of the cascade training, which helped them to heighten their self-awareness and understanding that the teaching should be focussed on engaging students and developing the four English language skills. This was further proven in triangulation, as in their lesson documents there were various techniques and strategies that are student-centred and aligned with the action-oriented approach. The lessons were focussed on students' language development, giving importance to their participation and active learning. Besides, the teachers also stated that, the cascade training had carved ways for them to become lifelong learners to continue to improve their knowledge and improve their teaching skills. Even those who complained that the cascade training was not helpful, somehow developed and connected by a strong

network of support group supporting one another by sharing ideas, resources as well as uplift one another to enhance their teaching practices.

Contrasting to the finding of this study, Uri and Aziz (2018) found that teachers found themselves as a setback as they were unable to shift from teacher-centred to student-centred due to lack of understanding and different views. Similarly, Khair and Shah (2021) and Uri (2021) found that teachers were having difficulties in implementing the curriculum due to their lack of understanding in terms of the developing classroom teaching and learning practices such as difficulties in understanding the scheme of work and developing classroom activities that matches the learning standards (LS) that are aligned to the CEFR-aligned curriculum. Nawai and Said (2020), Ong (2022), Uri (2023) and Renganathan (2023) have also stated that the teachers in the rural area are finding it difficult to understand the curriculum due to the lack of understanding caused by improper cascade training sessions.

To summarise, as opposed to the findings of the previous studies, this study found that curriculum is moving in the right direction as it is found that the cascade training has tremendously helped teachers to transform their teaching practices towards a more student-centred, reflective and skill-focussed approach. This has made a significant impact on moving away from the washback effect of examination that has been plaguing the Malaysian English language education with exam-oriented practices. The cascade training has helped for the classroom practices to move into the right direction which may help to change the educational landscape in future.

5.4.3 The Deep-rooted Practice of Teacher-centredness and Exam-oriented

Teaching

Despite the cascade training uplifting teachers understanding and changing the perceptions in classroom teaching and learning practices with redefined teaching practices, the practice of ‘teacher-centredness’ and ‘exam-oriented practices’ are still found to be in existence in the post-cascade training classroom practices. It is due to the challenges and complexities they face in implementing the new curriculum in their teaching environment. Although the focus of the training is to help teachers to understand the development of communicative competence through student-centred approaches, teacher-centred approaches are still found to be in practice among some teachers. This is due to the challenges such as passive students with lacking in confidence, diversified language abilities in classrooms and language barriers.

From the teachers’ narratives, they also said that, exam-oriented practices were still in practice within the classroom walls to a certain extent but not as brazen as the *Kurikulum Bersepadu Sekolah Menengah* (KBSM) days. Although the cascade training has emphasised on broadening teachers’ perspective on focussing on teaching and learning the skills rather than doing examination practices, there are teachers who stated that they still prioritise examinations and exam results. This is happening because of the very deep-seated culture of examination and test results being used as a measure of success in acquisition of knowledge.

What is striking in the findings is that even teachers who have displayed excellent understanding of the CEFR-aligned curriculum are compelled to align their teaching practices with exam-oriented practices. This is because their practices are influenced

by the expectations of stakeholders where academic success is equated to test scores. This shows that despite moving forward in teaching and learning practices, the exam-oriented practices are not completely eradicated but what could be seen is that it is in control. From the teachers' narratives and their practices, it shows that there are some conventional practices such as exam-oriented teaching and teacher-centred classroom practices, which were brazenly practiced prior to the implementation of the CEFR-aligned curriculum was still being practiced within the current curriculum but not as much as before. Hence it is revealed that though cascade training has introduced new perspectives in the pedagogical practices, the full realisation is still being hindered by the current norms, practical constraints, and expectations.

Similarly, Ong (2022) and Aziz (2021) found that teachers were still having the exam-oriented and teacher-centredness in their practice but in a limited manner, but Alih et al. (2020) found that teachers post-cascade training are slowly moving away from being focussed in exam and teacher-centredness. Nonetheless, Nii and Yunus (2022) identified a slow shift from teacher-centredness to students-centredness, while exam-oriented practices are still taking place in the classrooms. Based on the current study the exam-oriented practices are still being in practice due as stakeholders such as parents and teachers who want to continue to have measurable instruments to measure students' achievements and learning outcomes. Therefore, the exam-oriented practices are still being practiced to some extent but not brazenly.

To summarise, although the cascade training has brought about mixed impact in classroom practices, it has fostered growth among teachers with initiative for professional development and move towards student-centred learning. Despite the

direction of the implementation is moving towards the right directions, teacher-centredness and exam-oriented practices are still in practice in classroom for various reasons, but they are still in control and importance are still given to the curriculum that is prescribed in the curriculum documents rather than shifting fully into exam-oriented practices.

5.5 Suggestions to Stakeholders to Improve Cascade Training for Better Teacher Understanding of the CEFR-aligned English Language Curriculum for Secondary Schools

The stakeholders in this study are referred to people who are directly involved in the planning and implementing of the cascade training for CEFR-aligned English language curriculum implementation such as, the Ministry of Education Malaysia, curriculum developers, training developers, master trainers, head of the panels, teacher mentors, SISC+ officers and teachers in general. In their narrations, teachers who were involved in this study have suggested to the stakeholders on ways to improve cascade training for better teacher understanding of the CEFR-aligned English language curriculum for better curriculum implementation. This discussion will explore the findings of the data analysis based on two aspects. The two aspects are training improvement and suggestions and improving training for better curriculum implementation.

5.5.1 Training Improvement and Suggestions for Better Understanding of the Curriculum

According to the teachers' narration among the issues that were identified in the delivery of the cascade training was the schedule being too packed and too much information disseminated at a short period of time. Besides, inexperienced trainers

lacking in-depth knowledge also affected teachers' understanding of the curriculum. To address these issues, the teachers' suggested that the training programme planned for the dissemination of knowledge for curriculum implementation to be more comprehensive and structured.

One way of doing it is by using the phased approach which would give teachers time to absorb and understand the content of the training. Additionally, it was also suggested to have more experienced teachers as trainers and train them with andragogical skills as well as ensuring them to have in-depth knowledge in terms of theory and practice so that the dissemination of knowledge can be done smoothly. Trainers with extensive knowledge would be able to fill in the gap between the theory and practice in the implementation of the CEFR-aligned English language curriculum.

Through the narrations and reflections also, teachers stressed on the need for continuous support after the cascade training which they did not get after the past trainings. Teachers suggested that they are given a form of support mechanism, by providing them help with mentor support programmes, and additional resources. The mentor support programme can be in various ways such as one to one mentoring, or group mentoring involving someone who is well-versed in the curriculum to guide the teachers. Furthermore, providing opportunities with more professional development opportunities for teachers to constantly update their skills and knowledge is also important. Teachers also suggested network opportunities as a way for professional growth in a rather informal setting for teachers to connect, learn from one another and share their experiences which can significantly help them in improving their teaching practices.

Similarly, Ong and Tajuddin (2021) suggested that support and network opportunities need to be added in cascade trainings. In contrast, Khair and Shah (2021), Sahib and Stapa (2021), Hishamuddin et al. (2023) and Aziz et al. (2018) suggested a continuous cascade training sessions and follow up trainings to ensure teachers really understand the curriculum.

The findings of this study align closely with the recommendations put forth by Ong and Tajuddin (2021), as well as those of Khair and Shah (2021), Sahib and Stapa (2021), Hishamuddin et al. (2023), and Aziz et al. (2018). Similar to the emphasis in the current study on providing ongoing support mechanisms and mentorship opportunities following the initial cascade training, Ong and Tajuddin (2021) highlight the importance of building structured support and professional networks. These support systems enable teachers to share best practices, seek advice, and develop confidence in implementing the curriculum, thereby reinforcing the study's assertion that such continuous backing is critical.

In parallel, the calls for phased and continuous training sessions, as suggested in the present findings, are also strongly supported by Khair and Shah (2021), Sahib and Stapa (2021), Hishamuddin et al. (2023), and Aziz et al. (2018). These studies emphasise that follow-up trainings and extended professional development efforts are key to ensuring that teachers gain a deep, practical understanding of curriculum changes. By advocating regular review sessions, ongoing skill refinement, and guidance from experienced trainers, these studies echo the idea that teacher development should not be confined to an initial, intense training period. Instead, it should be revisited, expanded upon, and consistently reinforced over time.

The previous studies corroborate with the current study's findings that effective curriculum implementation is not achieved by single, short bursts of training. Rather, it flourishes through carefully paced, repeated training opportunities, robust support structures, and ample chances for educators to connect and learn from one another. This alignment with existing research strengthens the argument for implementing a comprehensive, ongoing, and well-supported cascade training model.

5.5.2 Suggestions to Improve Training for Better Classroom Practices

To ensure a better curriculum implementation it is important for teachers to have hands-on experience within the training environment before practicing it in the real classrooms and they need to be aware of the practical application and classroom assessments. The narrations and reflections as well as lesson documents from teachers revealed that in the current cascade training there is a disconnection between the training and classroom application which needs to be addressed. Teachers expressed the need for training for lesson implementation in terms of applying real-world context in English language teaching and practical activities that are aligned to the curriculum. The practical activities should also focus on strategies to develop proficiency among low proficiency students. These aspects are important to be focussed on as it would ensure that teachers are adequately prepared to implement the curriculum accordingly.

In terms of classroom assessments, it was found that despite the communicative goals of the CEFR-aligned English language curriculum, the exam-oriented assessment methods are still in practice. Besides, it is also found that teachers are assessing students with worksheets that are not according to the level of the students and the

language level being set higher than what the students should master, affect students' motivation to learn as the task are too difficult for them.

According to the teachers, training should arm teachers with effective strategies and ability to understand and develop learning tools and resources in terms of evaluating students' communicative abilities in the use of the language in real-world context as required in the action-oriented approach. There are similar studies that felt the cascade training needs to focus on developing teachers' understanding of classroom practices from all aspects so that the implementation process can be done smoothly (Sahib & Stapa, 2021; Aziz et al., 2018; Khair & Shah, 2021; Uri et al., 2018). According to them, the shortcomings in cascade training has affected teachers' understanding and their classroom practices.

Studies by Sahib and Stapa (2021), Aziz et al. (2018), Khair and Shah (2021), and Uri et al. (2018) collectively emphasise that the cascade training model often falls short in ensuring that teachers gain a comprehensive understanding of how to translate curriculum objectives into real-world classroom practices. These studies suggest that teachers frequently emerge from the training process without the necessary strategies to meaningfully engage students or develop suitable, level-appropriate classroom activities.

The present study's findings mirror these concerns, showing that teachers struggle to implement the CEFR-aligned curriculum as intended and resort to practices that may not foster the communicative competencies the curriculum aims to develop. By confirming that teachers need more robust, contextually grounded training, one that

addresses the complexities of classroom teaching, this study reinforces the conclusions drawn by earlier researchers. In doing so, it underscores the urgent need to re-evaluate and improve the cascade training model to better support teachers in achieving improved student learning outcomes.

5.6 Recommendation for other Teachers to Improve Curriculum Implementation in Line with the CEFR-aligned English Language Curriculum for Secondary Schools

Based on the narrations, reflections and lesson documents from the teachers, several recommendations are given to help teachers to improve curriculum implementation, which further makes a difference in classroom practices. The focus here is to provide teachers with strategies that are actionable and insights that can significantly improve their effectiveness in their teaching and learning practices. This will further contribute towards improving students' language learning experience.

5.6.1 Inclusion of Digital Technology in Language Learning

Teachers in their narrations and reflections has suggested that the inclusion of technology in language learning, especially in the digital age is highly recommendable. This is because the role of digital literacy and technology in language learning has become very much significant. The Digital Education Policy (2023) introduced by the Ministry of Education Malaysia, stands as a testament for digitalisation of the teaching and learning of English language. Teachers are required to integrate digital technology in their lessons to make their lessons more interactive and motivating students to learn English which is in line with the Digital Education Policy (2023). By using various online and digital tools, English language learning can be more interactive, effective

and engaging. Indirectly, this also addresses the needs for language learning among the current generation of students who are digital natives.

In order, to be able to use digital tools teachers need to be given an ongoing professional development in educational technology and innovative teaching methods using technology to help teachers to constantly upgrade and update themselves. This is vital for an effective integration of new tools and approaches in classrooms which would ensure the teaching approaches are current and effective. Similarly, Pillai (2023), Ramasamy et al. (2024), and Ng and Yunus (2021) have stated that it is high time for the inclusion of technology in the CEFR-aligned English language curriculum.

5.6.2 Shifting the Focus to Local Culture

Teachers' suggestion to include more local culture-based activities in the textbook, was echoed in this study. This move was suggested as a way of making learning the English language a more relatable, meaningful, and engaging affair for students, as local culture is easy to be understood and save teachers' time explaining the unfamiliar contents. Other than that, it helps teachers to focus more on the language development rather than explaining the content.

By integrating the local culture, students are given a content that is more familiar and accessible for students to practice the language. The cultural relevance will not only help students to develop their comprehension easily but also enables them to connect the culture with the language by focussing on attempting the language, as the culture is already something that is familiar to them. This is also in supportive of the idea of developing communicative competence as proffered by the action-oriented approach.

Studies have also stated that the current textbook is too foreign and stands as a challenge to those who are from the deprived background (Kamal, 2020, Pillai, 2023; Shak et al., 2023; Sahar & Emaliana, 2023). Textbook and lessons that are based on local culture and locality would be helpful to ensure better understanding and develop a sense of connections among students.

5.7 Linking Findings to the Underpinning Theory

The findings of this study align significantly with the theoretical underpinnings of constructivism by Vygotsky (1978) and the action-oriented approach central to the CEFR-aligned English language curriculum. Constructivism posits that learners actively construct their own understanding and knowledge of the world through experiences and interactions (Vygotsky, 1978; Tan & Ng, 2021). This theory resonates deeply with the action-oriented approach, which encourages active, real-world engagement in language learning, fostering both critical thinking and communicative competence (Piccardo, 2019; Fischer, 2020).

Vygotsky's constructivism can be directly linked to how teachers' understanding of the curriculum develops through collaborative learning experiences, such as cascade training. Cascade training, when effectively conducted, provides teachers with a scaffolded environment where they can engage with curriculum objectives, methodologies, and resources in a supported manner. However, the findings indicate variability in the effectiveness of cascade training, which reflects a disparity in how scaffolding is implemented during training sessions.

The Teachers who demonstrated deeper understanding of the CEFR-aligned curriculum were able to construct their knowledge through active participation in cascade training sessions, collaborative reflection, and experimentation in their classrooms. This aligns with constructivist principles, where learning is seen as a dynamic process of building new understandings based on prior knowledge and social interactions (Dass et al., 2021; Orak & Al-khresheh, 2021). On the other hand, teachers who struggled with curriculum implementation lacked the necessary scaffolding or the opportunity to bridge the gap between theoretical knowledge and practical application.

The CEFR-aligned curriculum is rooted in the action-oriented approach, which is designed to make language learning contextual, purposeful, and participative (Piccardo, 2019; North, 2022). The findings revealed that teachers who had internalised the principles of the CEFR were able to integrate real-life scenarios, collaborative activities, and learner autonomy into their lessons. These practices reflect the action-oriented approach's focus on engaging learners to use the target language to achieve communicative goals (North 2021; Piccardo, 2020).

Conversely, the study found that some teachers reverted to traditional teacher-centred and exam-oriented practices. These practices stand in stark contrast to the action-oriented approach, which values interaction and learner agency over rote memorisation and passive instruction. The persistence of such practices can be linked to the lack of adequate training, classroom constraints (e.g., low student proficiency, limited resources) and entrenched educational norms.

The cascade training model, when aligned with constructivist principles, has the potential to serve as a collaborative and experiential learning platform for teachers. However, the findings indicate that while some teachers found the training beneficial, others experienced it as rushed and overly theoretical. This suggests a mismatch between the training design and the constructivist ideals of providing meaningful, hands-on, and contextual learning experiences.

The CEFR-aligned curriculum and cascade training reflect constructivist and action-oriented principles. However, their success depends on consistent and meaningful implementation. Bridging the gap between theory and practice for all teachers remains crucial.

5.8 Conclusion

This study have attempted to explore teachers' understanding of curriculum implementation in the Malaysian Secondary English language classrooms. This study had analysed how the cascade training programmes have helped teachers in understanding the curriculum and further implement it effectively in their classrooms. The study has revealed a spectrum of understanding and classroom practices among teachers influenced by the cascade training programmes.

Some teachers have displayed understanding of the curriculum. Although they have displayed good and in-depth understanding of the curriculum by successfully integrating the CEFR principles in the curriculum in planning their lessons, designing classroom activities by incorporating teaching methodologies that are relevant to the curriculum and learning objectives and implementing lessons effectively, there are

others who are still struggling to align the lesson plans and classroom practices with the curriculum standards. The curriculum being in practice at secondary schools since 2016 and completing its first cycle in 2025. However, there are teachers who are unable to comprehend the curriculum appropriately in terms of practice.

The findings show that the cascade training has been helpful for teachers to develop their understanding of the CEFR framework and the CEFR-aligned curriculum as well as improving their teaching practices. However, it is also to take note that the effectiveness of the cascade training did not see uniformity among all the teachers as there were inconsistencies in its effectiveness where some teachers have seen tremendous understanding and improvement in their classroom practices while others find the training was inadequate and had flaws that hampered teachers' understanding. The inconsistencies in cascade training found in the study are related to factors like content of the training, the pace and trainer's expertise. In terms of recommendations, the teachers emphasised on the integration of technology in language learning and bringing the local cultural elements in the textbooks and materials rather than having foreign cultures which are complicated for students to understand. The strategies suggested are based on teachers' experiences in classrooms and to make learning more engaging and relatable to students.

Teachers' understanding of curriculum implementation in Malaysian secondary schools are moving in the right direction with some hiccups and struggles with the objective of the curriculum being realised by the teachers, although there are issues in terms of understanding and implementation among teachers, they still implement the curriculum the way they can do it rather than moving into teaching for examinations

and focussing solely on examination format as in the previous curriculum, which was an outright rejection of the curriculum. However, it is also important to take into account that teachers need to be given continuous support in various forms so that those who lack the understanding will be able to clear the doubts and understand better and those who have better understanding can explore further for innovations along the curriculum. This would help the teachers to stay relevant and not revert to exam-based teaching. The findings and recommendations of the study have provided invaluable perspective for improvement in teacher training and curriculum implementation within the CEFR-aligned English language curriculum.

5.9 Implication of the Study

This study highlights several important implications for improving the implementation of the CEFR-aligned English language curriculum in Malaysia. One major issue is the cascade training model, which appears to have limited effectiveness. Many teachers face challenges in understanding CEFR levels and aligning their lessons with these standards. This shows a need to improve training programmes by including more practical activities and classroom examples. Teachers should also receive ongoing support after training to ensure they can apply what they have learned effectively.

Another key point is the persistence of teacher-centred and exam-focused practices. These approaches make it difficult to adopt the action-oriented methods encouraged by the CEFR curriculum. To address this, training programmes need to emphasise more interactive and student-centred teaching strategies. Teachers should be equipped with skills to encourage students to think critically, work independently, and apply

language skills in real-world situations. Using digital tools and technology in training could also help teachers create more engaging lessons.

The study also stresses the importance of adapting the CEFR curriculum to Malaysia's unique educational environment. Including local cultural elements and examples in the training and teaching materials can help bridge the gap between global standards and local classrooms. This would make the curriculum more relevant and relatable for both teachers and students.

Finally, collaboration among stakeholders such as policymakers, trainers, and teachers is essential for the success of the curriculum. The Ministry of Education can use the findings of this study to refine the training process and provide more guidance for teachers. Regular feedback from teachers should also be considered to improve future training sessions and curriculum planning.

5.10 Recommendations for Future Studies

From the journey of conducting this study, there are several opportunities for future studies, and these are some recommendations that can be given. Firstly, the study can be extended to all the other states in Malaysia to get macro level picture of teachers' understanding of the curriculum. It could be interesting to see what teachers' are understanding of the curriculum implementation whether they are similar or different from what was found in this study.

Secondly, it is also suggested that a study can be carried out among the Master Trainers who contributed as trainers in the cascade training, disseminating the CEFR-aligned

curriculum to a large number of teachers. Their understanding and classroom practices can be observed to see the extent of their own understanding. It would be interesting to see how much the Master Trainers themselves have gained in trainings that is shown in their classroom practices.

Thirdly, it is suggested that future studies examine the extent of technology integration in curriculum implementation among English language teachers. This would help assess how the teaching of English evolves with the use of technology. Such studies should ensure that technological advancements align with the requirements outlined in the curriculum documents.

Finally, future research can collect data from both teachers and students to explore teachers' understanding of the curriculum and students' perceptions of their teachers' lessons. This includes examining how effectively lessons develop students' language skills and motivation to learn the language. Such research would provide insights into the extent of students' understanding of the lessons based on their teachers' practices.

This study employed the theory of constructivism by Vygotsky (1978) and the curriculum model by Tyler's (1940) and Oliva's (2009) to understand teachers' understanding of curriculum implementation. It focused on four aspects: objectives, content, learning experiences, and evaluation from the cascade training they attended. Vygotsky's (1978) theory of constructivism postulates that learners actively develop their own understanding by exploring and through active learning. The theory of constructivism also has its branches with the fundamental of CEFR-aligned English language curriculum which was developed within the frame of action-oriented

approach. In this study, Tyler's (1940) and Oliva's (2009) curriculum framework are merged into four aspects to identify teachers' understanding of curriculum implementation of the CEFR-aligned curriculum that is built based on the fundamentals of constructivism. It is recommended that future studies on curriculum implementation can make this theory, model and the action-oriented approach as a reference to studies on curriculum implementation of CEFR-aligned English language curriculum in future.

The instrument used for this study, the open-ended interview protocol and guided reflection was the result of innovation and modification of various studies (McGarry, 2021; Anwar, 2020; Nuraini, 2020; Rahman, 2014; Shapii, 2012; Wang, 2008; Karavas, 1993; Barkhuizen, 2017; Athanases & Sanchez, 2020; Bjønness, 2016; Nurkamto et al., 2022). These documents are contributions made through this study for the qualitative research field for the use of qualitative researchers in the future to replicate for other related studies. This study can also be a reference for any other studies in the future.

5.11 Ways to Improve Training and Curriculum Implementation

From the findings and discussion of this study, strategies for improvisation of classroom practices and training programmes in the implementation of the CEFR-aligned English language curriculum is derived explicitly and implicitly from the data collected from this study. The need for the improvements of training has also been suggested by Lee et al. (2022) and Yusoff et al. (2022) who felt that the cascade training programme could be improvised for learning experience for teachers to be able to understand the curriculum better. Besides, Alih et al. (2020), Khair and Shah

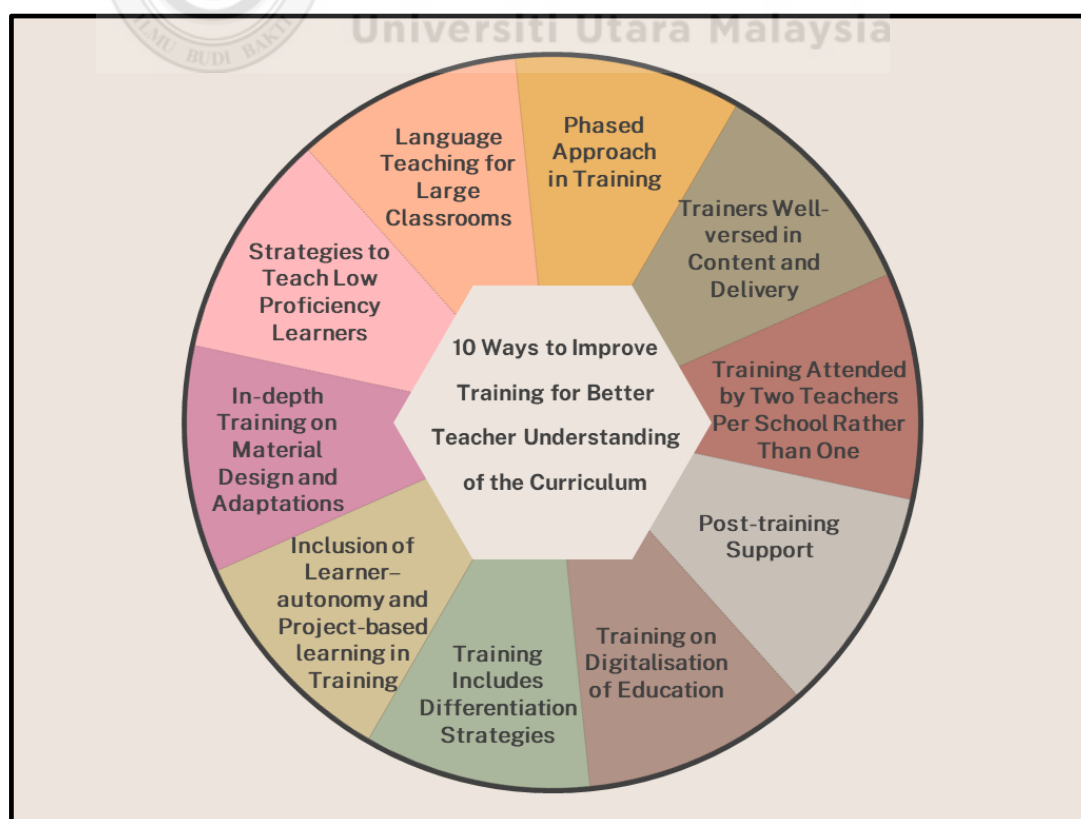
(2021) and Kaur and Jian (2022) felt that there is a need for teachers to be given support or guide for them to follow from time to time while implementing the curriculum so that the challenges become lesser, and they learn by doing it.

5.11.1 Strategies for Training Improvement

The strategies to improvise the training is derived from the issues and problems of cascade training identified through the themes and data in the study. The strategies that are suggested are derived implicitly and explicitly from the findings of the study. It is also in line with the English language education roadmap and can be considered for the next cycle of the curriculum implementation after the year 2025. From the findings of this study, ten strategies are suggested on how the training sessions can be improved for better teacher understanding as shown in Figure 39:

Figure 39

Strategies for training improvement



- a) Firstly, it is suggested that the training is carried out using a phased approach where the training is divided into several distinct phases or segments, where each phase will focus on specific skills. This approach would allow teachers to learn gradually, and they could absorb and apply the new ideas or information learned at a manageable phase.
- b) Secondly, it is important to ensure trainers are well-versed in both theory and practical applications of the curriculum. The selection of trainers should be more stringent and should be provided training on andragogy as well as the training content. Trainers should be provided opportunity to conduct micro training sessions during their training to train them on their delivery.
- c) Thirdly, participants for the training, rather than getting one teacher per school, two teachers should be allowed to attend the training so that they could actually support one another when they are to go back to school and carry out training for other English teachers. They can always check their understanding with one another to ensure that the dissemination of knowledge is not diverted and diluted.
- d) Fourthly, post-training support is important for the reinforcement after the training as it will help teachers to address challenges faced in the implementation of the curriculum in the classroom and find a collective solution to the issues. Besides, it will also help teachers to provide feedback on the strategies used in the classroom on what works and what does not work. Through these experiences, suggestions for improvisation and support can be provided so that the teachers will be able to implement the curriculum effectively in their own environment.

- e) Next, the training that is conducted for teachers should also include a phase or a part of the training where the use of technology in the English language classrooms should be included. This part of the training should focus on developing student-centred, technology enhanced lessons. Aligning English language lessons with digital technology is important as to keep abreast to the advancement of the global environment. Therefore, the use of technology can enhance learning and obtain student engagement in a much easier way. Therefore, teachers need to be given training on the use of digital technology for language learning so that they can use tools that are available effectively in their lessons. This is in line with the aspirations of National Digital Education Policy (2023) that is currently in practice.
- f) In addition, differentiation strategies should be extensively discussed and conducted in training, in regard to curriculum implementation. This is because, understanding differentiation strategies extensively allows teachers to plan and develop lessons for classrooms with diverse needs of learners. By allocating more time and training for differentiation strategies in training would allow teachers to create more inclusive and effective learning strategies. This would also empower teachers to design lessons that would help all students with difference language background and proficiency level to be engaged with the lesson. Keeping in mind that most classrooms in Malaysian secondary schools consist of diverse learners, extra attention in differentiation in training programmes would enhance overall effectiveness of curriculum implementation.
- g) Furthermore, the training carried out for curriculum implementation should also focus on strategies for student empowerment focussing on inclusion of

learner autonomy and project-based learning strategies within the English language classrooms. The lack of this approaches in classroom leads to lack of critical thinking and problem-solving skills. Teachers should be shown the strategies to develop creative and critical thinking skills, problem solving skills, and being active learners. Training should focus on developing these skills among students of different levels instead of focusing in general, so that teachers understand how and what works for their students. This element is important in training programmes so that teachers understand that these skills can be developed among students of all levels while developing the language skills.

- h) To prevent over reliance on textbook usage or exam-centred practices and worksheets that are misaligned with students' level, teachers need to understand material designs in depth. Therefore, training on materials adaptation and designs should focus on developing teachers' understanding of materials. Teachers need to be trained to analyse and develop materials according to students' proficiency level and focussed on developing the skills rather than mere practices.
- i) Low proficiency learners, who are unable to master the English language due to various reasons cannot be abandoned. Teachers need to be trained with strategies to overcome issues with low proficiency learners to develop their language proficiency.
- j) Finally, teachers also need to be trained to deal with large classroom size, with strategies that are fit for large classrooms. This is so that teachers know how to deal with students with diverse background in a crowded classroom.

The ten suggested strategies for training improvement are given based on the suggestions given by the teachers for the stakeholders for training improvement. As mentioned earlier the stakeholders in this study are referred to people who are directly involved in planning and implementing the cascade training for CEFR-aligned English language curriculum implementation such as, the Ministry of Education Malaysia, curriculum developers, training developers, master trainers, head of the panels, teacher mentors, SISC+ officers and teachers in general. It is hoped that the strategies provided in this study are taken into considerations for the training of the teachers for the new cycle of curriculum implementation. The current cycle of curriculum implementation will end 2025 as stated in the English Language Education Roadmap 2015 – 2025.

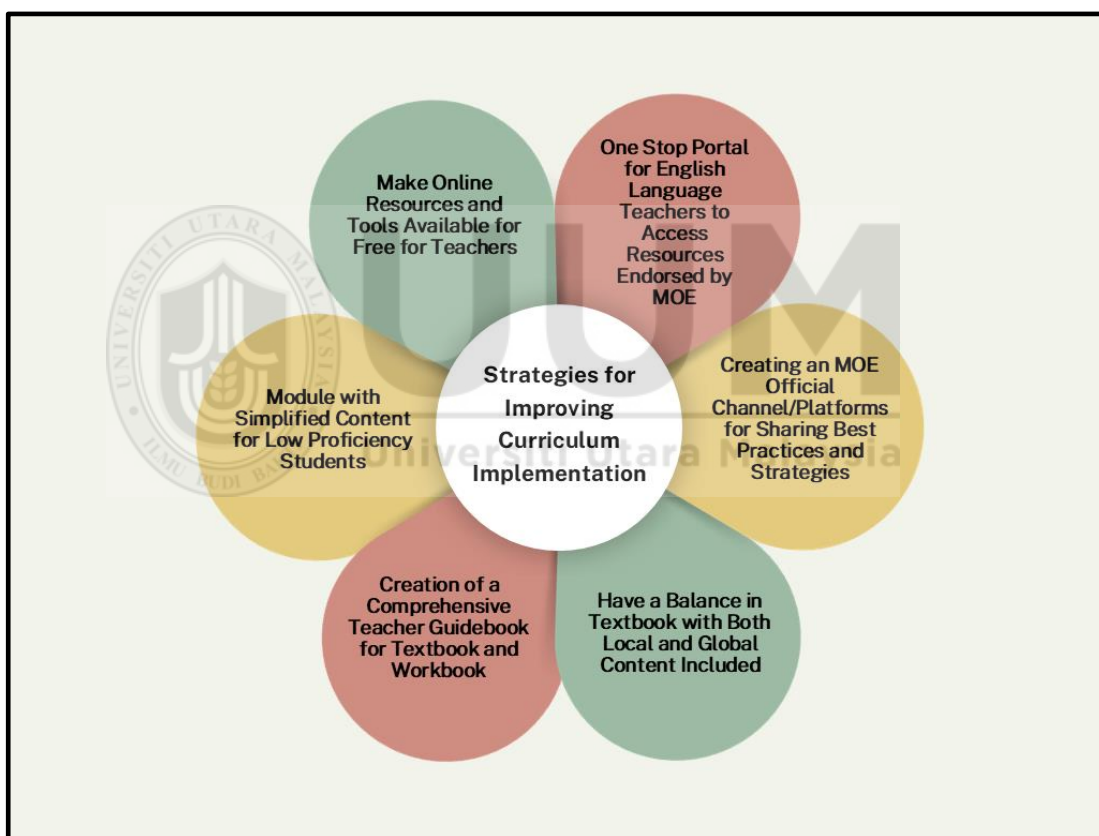


5.11.2 Strategies for Improving Curriculum Implementation

Based on the issues and problems identified in curriculum implementation through the data and themes in the study, six strategies for improving curriculum implementation are suggested based on the data derived explicitly and implicitly from the study. The strategies shown in Figure 40 will suggest how curriculum implementation can be made better for teachers.

Figure 40

Strategies for Improving Curriculum Implementation



- a) One way to improve teachers' practice is the creation of the Ministry of Education endorsed one-stop portal for English language teachers. The creation of this portal would be an effective strategy to support teachers in curriculum implementation. This portal should be designed to offer teachers access to sample lesson plans, teaching materials and other resources, which are checked

and approved by experts under the purview of Ministry of Education. This is to ensure that teachers are provided with appropriate materials and strategies that are in line with the training provided. This would minimise the risk of adapting materials, tools, and lesson plans from sources that are not endorsed by Ministry which may be ineffective and misaligned. Teachers who have materials to be shared can also submit them to this portal to be checked and then shared with teachers. This platform may not only streamline gathering of resources, but also promotes consistency and high-quality teaching practices Malaysia wide.

- b) Secondly, to help teachers across Malaysia with the burden to teach diverse student proficiency and understanding, teachers need to be constantly shown and shared with examples of best practices. This can be done by leveraging platforms like the YouTube or TikTok, where the Ministry of Education Malaysia can have an official channel to share the best practices of teaching of English language using the current curriculum with different types of strategies and levels of students. Since it is broadcasted in the channel under the Ministry of Education, it will be a trusted resource for teachers to look for rather than blindly following strategies that are shared online in various channels and pages which may not even follow the requirements in the curriculum documents. This would also be a strategy to support teachers post training.
- c) Thirdly, the content of textbooks needs to be balanced with local and global content. This is crucial as it would ensure that students are exposed to a diverse range of perspectives. The local content would be easier for students to understand and connect while learning the language and adding the global content along with the local content would enable them to understand the interconnectedness of today's world. This would balance the learning of the

language with development of world view while appreciating the local culture.

This strategy would create a balanced and enriching curriculum, making it relevant and more engaging, while helping to develop individuals who are well-rounded and culturally aware.

- d) Next, a comprehensive teacher guidebook for textbook and workbook should be developed for teachers. The teacher guide should provide in-depth details of the content to be taught, explanation on foreign culture with relevant support materials which would reduce teachers' time to look for support explanation. It should also provide details of websites and link to resources that they can adapt and adopt for their lessons. Besides, the guidebook should also provide a brief explanation, what is the aspect of language skill that they need to focus on and suggestions for differentiation strategies for different types of learners, be it slow, intermediate, and advanced. It is to be noted that, the current teacher guide provides very general explanation on the task with answers only.
- e) To help teachers with low proficiency learners, a comprehensive and simplified module should be developed under the purview of Ministry of Education, Malaysia. This module will focus on basic language skills and foundational concepts, but within the curriculum documents, which means the low proficiency students learn the same thing as others, but they are provided with simplified and less challenging materials to help develop the language and critical thinking skills. This would actually build their confidence and motivation to learn the language at their own pace. The inclusion of visual aids, simplified texts and interactive activities could further enhance understanding and retention of low proficiency learners.

- f) Lastly, to further enhance teacher practices in curriculum implementation, it is suggested that a wide range of cost-free online teaching and learning resource are made available for teachers. The online learning resource that are available now are very limited and to move towards digitalisation of English language learning which would further make the implementation of the CEFR-aligned English language curriculum, teachers need to be provided with a wide range of online platforms and resources to pick and choose from for classroom practices. This would make learning more engaging and meaningful as well as making teacher practices more diversified.

The six suggested strategies for curriculum implementation are given based on the ideas given by the teachers for other teachers to improve their classroom practices, hence improving the entire process of curriculum implementation. The six suggested strategies are in line with the implementation of the CEFR-aligned English language curriculum and will be appropriate for the teaching and learning environment in Malaysia. It is hoped that the strategies provided in this study are taken into considerations for classroom practices in the current and future cycles of curriculum implementation after the year 2025. The current cycle of curriculum implementation will end in 2025 as stated in the English Language Education Roadmap 2015 – 2025.

5.12 Summary

This chapter answered the research questions based on the themes that emerged for the data. The discussion chapter provides a detailed explanation on the study by relating the themes of the study with the finding of the previous studies in the area of teacher understanding of the curriculum and the cascade training and its relation to their understanding as well as classroom practices. The study also provided conclusions based on the themes and recommendations for future research have also been provided. Other than that, based on the findings in this study, eight strategies for training improvement for stakeholders to take into consideration for future trainings and another six strategies for better curriculum implementation to improve classroom practices was also provided. These strategies were derived from the issues and problems identified in curriculum implementation found in the themes in this study. The strategies are an aspiration to strengthen the implementation of the CEFR-aligned English language curriculum in secondary schools in Malaysia.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

Conditional approval letter to conduct research from Ministry of Education (MOE)

	KEMENTERIAN PENDIDIKAN MALAYSIA BAHAGIAN PERANCANGAN DAN PENYELIDIKAN DASAR PENDIDIKAN ARAS 1-4, BLOK E8 KOMPLEKS KERAJAAN PARCEL E PUSAT PENTADBIRAN KERAJAAN PERSEKUTUAN 62604 PUTRAJAYA	TEL : 0388846591 FAKS : 0388846579
Ruj. Kami : KPM.600-3/2/3-eras(17115) Tarikh : 9 Ogos 2023		
MOHANA RAM A/L MURUGIAH NO. KP : 800523086073		
NO 9 LALUAN CHEMOR MAJU 17 TAMAN CHEMOR IDAMAN 31200 CHEMOR PERAK		
Tuan,		
KELULUSAN BERSYARAT UNTUK MENJALANKAN KAJIAN : NARRATIVE INQUIRY ON TEACHERS' UNDERSTANDING OF CURRICULUM IMPLEMENTATION IN THE MALAYSIAN SECONDARY ENGLISH LANGUAGE CLASSROOMS		
Perkara di atas adalah dirujuk.		
2. Sukacita dimaklumkan bahawa permohonan tuan untuk menjalankan kajian seperti di bawah telah diluluskan dengan syarat :		
" KELULUSAN INI BERGANTUNG KEPADA KEBENARAN PENGARAH JPN DAN PERTIMBANGAN PENTADBIR SEKOLAH. "		
3. Kelulusan adalah berdasarkan kepada kertas cadangan penyelidikan dan instrumen kajian yang dikemukakan oleh tuan kepada bahagian ini. Walau bagaimanapun kelulusan ini bergantung kepada kebenaran Jabatan Pendidikan Negeri dan Pengetua / Guru Besar yang berkenaan.		
4. Surat kelulusan ini sah digunakan bermula dari 14 Ogos 2023 hingga 31 Januari 2024		
5. Tuan dikehendaki menyerahkan senaskhah laporan akhir kajian dalam bentuk <i>hardcopy</i> bersama salinan <i>softcopy</i> berformat pdf dalam CD kepada Bahagian ini. Tuan juga diingatkan supaya mendapat kebenaran terlebih dahulu daripada Bahagian ini sekiranya sebahagian atau sepenuhnya dapatan kajian tersebut hendak diterbitkan di mana-mana forum, seminar atau diumumkan kepada media massa.		
Sekian untuk makluman dan tindakan tuan selanjutnya. Terima kasih.		
"BERKHIDMAT UNTUK NEGARA"		
Saya yang menjalankan amanah,		
Ketua Penolong Pengarah Kanan Sektor Penyelidikan dan Penilaian Dasar b.p. Pengarah Bahagian Perancangan dan Penyelidikan Dasar Pendidikan Kementerian Pendidikan Malaysia		
salinan kepada:-		
JABATAN PENDIDIKAN PERAK		
* SURAT INI DIJANA OLEH KOMPUTER DAN TIADA TANDATANGAN DIPERLUKAN *		

APPENDIX B

Approval letter to conduct research from Perak State Education Department



KEMENTERIAN PENDIDIKAN

Jabatan Pendidikan Negeri Perak
Jalan Tun Abdul Razak
30640 Ipoh, Perak Darul Ridzuan

Tel : 605 501 5000
Faks : 605 527 7273
Laman Web : <http://jpnperak.moe.gov.my>

"PENDIDIKAN BERKUALITI, SEKOLAH UNGGUL, MURID HOLISTIK"

Ruj. Kami : JPNPk.SPS.USJK.600-1Jld.10(48)
Tarikh : 15 Ogos 2023

Mohana Ram Murugiah
No.9, Laluan Chemor Maju 17
Taman Chemor Idaman, 31200 Chemor, Perak

Tuan,

KELULUSAN UNTUK MENJALANKAN KAJIAN DI SEKOLAH-SEKOLAH NEGERI PERAK DI BAWAH JABATAN PENDIDIKAN NEGERI PERAK

Dengan segala hormatnya, perkara di atas adalah dirujuk dan surat tuan yang diterima pada 14 Ogos 2023 adalah berkaitan.

2. Sehubungan dengan itu, dimaklumkan bahawa Jabatan Pendidikan Negeri Perak tiada halangan untuk membenarkan pihak tuan menjalankan kajian yang bertajuk "**NARRATIVE INQUIRY ON TEACHERS UNDERSTANDING OF CURRICULUM IMPLEMENTATION IN THE MALAYSIAN SECONDARY ENGLISH LANGUAGE CLASSROOMS**" seperti dinyatakan dalam surat tuan dengan syarat-syarat berikut:

- 2.1 Pihak tuan perlu mendapatkan kebenaran terlebih dahulu daripada Pegawai Pendidikan Daerah dan Pengetua / Guru Besar sekolah berkenaan untuk menggunakan sampel kajian;
- 2.2 Kajian yang dijalankan hendaklah tidak mengganggu proses pengajaran dan pembelajaran yang telah ditetapkan oleh pihak sekolah;
- 2.3 Pihak tuan bertanggungjawab menjaga keselamatan dan kebajikan murid dan guru yang terlibat dalam kajian ini;
- 2.4 Murid, guru dan warga sekolah tidak boleh dipaksa terlibat dalam kajian ini;
- 2.5 Pihak tuan hendaklah bertanggungjawab menanggung semua kos kajian;
- 2.6 Pihak tuan dipohon agar menghantar satu (1) salinan laporan kajian dalam tempoh 30 hari ke jabatan ini selepas kajian tersebut dilaksanakan;
- 2.7 Tiada sebarang implikasi kewangan kepada Jabatan Pendidikan Negeri Perak, Pejabat Pendidikan Daerah dan pihak sekolah;

.../2-



Sila catatkan rujukan Jabatan ini apabila berhubung

APPENDIX C

Open – ended Interview Questions

Interview Protocol

Introduction:

Thank you for agreeing to participate in this study. The purpose of this interview is to gather information about your experiences and perceptions regarding curriculum implementation in the Malaysian secondary English language classrooms. Please feel free to speak openly and honestly about your experiences.

General introduction:

Can you please tell me a little about yourself?

Can you tell me about your journey as a teacher?

RQ1 : To what extent do teachers understand the implementation of the curriculum through the training that they have received?

- a) Can you describe the training you have received regarding the CEFR – aligned English language curriculum implementation?
- b) What aspects of the training did you find most helpful in understanding the curriculum?
- c) Based on the training that you have received, can you please elaborate what have you understood about the implementation of the CEFR – aligned curriculum.
- d) How do you assess your understanding of the curriculum and your ability to implement it in your classroom?
- e) Can you describe any challenges you faced in understanding the curriculum and how you overcame those challenges?
- f) Did the training sessions meet your expectations in understanding the curriculum?
- g) Did you resort to any other sources to develop your understanding of the curriculum? What are they? Why?
- h) In what ways do you think your training and professional development have prepared you to implement the curriculum?

RQ2 : How far have the professional development courses helped teachers in the implementation of their lessons?

- a) How has the implementation of the CEFR-aligned curriculum impacted your teaching practices?
- b)
- c) Can you describe any challenges or obstacles that you faced in implementing the curriculum after the professional development courses?
- d) Are there any specific strategies or skills that you have learned in the professional development courses that have been particularly helpful in your classroom practice?
- e) Can you provide an example of how you have applied the concepts learned in the professional development courses in your classroom practices?
- f) How confident do you feel about implementing the curriculum in your classroom?
- g) Are there any specific areas of the curriculum that you feel less prepared to teach?
- h) Can you describe how do you integrate the CEFR framework into your classroom practices?
- i) Are there any challenges you face when integrating the CEFR framework into your lessons? If so, what are they?
- j) How do you assess (formatively) your students' language proficiency levels using the CEFR framework during your lessons?
- k) Are there any specific strategies or resources you use to help integrate the CEFR framework into your classroom practices?

e) RQ3 : What are the suggestions to improve professional development courses for English language teachers in regards to the cascade training that was done for the implementation of CEFR – aligned curriculum for secondary schools?

- a) How did you feel about the professional development courses for the implementation of the CEFR – Aligned curriculum? Were there any strengths or weaknesses that stood out to you?
- b) Can you think of any ways that the professional development courses could have better prepare you for the implementation of the curriculum?
- c) Can you suggest any improvements to the cascade training model to better support English language teachers in future?
- d) What could be done to better support teachers in implementing the curriculum after completing the professional development courses?
- e) How would you rate the effectiveness of the professional development courses in preparing you for the implementation of the CEFR-aligned curriculum?

RQ4: What are the recommendations for teachers to improve classroom practices to be in line with the curriculum?

- a) Can you describe your current classroom practices related to curriculum implementation?
- b) Can you think of any changes you made to your classroom practices to align with the curriculum?
- c) Are there any areas of your classroom practice that you feel could be improved to better align with the curriculum?
- d) What recommendations do you have for teachers to improve their classroom practices and better align with the curriculum?

Conclusion:

Thank you for your participation in this interview. Your input will be valuable in understanding teachers' experiences and perceptions regarding curriculum implementation in the Malaysian secondary English language classrooms.

(Adapted from : Anwar, 2020; Nuraini, 2020; Rahman, 2014 ; Shapii, 2012; Wang, 2008; Karavas, 1993)

Interview Protocol

Introduction:

Thank you once again for participate in this study and completing a lesson and a lesson reflection for this study. The purpose of this interview is to gather information based on the lesson plan and guided lesson reflection that you have written. Please feel free to speak openly and honestly about your experiences.

- a) Can you tell me what was your lesson about?
- b) Can you tell me some of the activities that was carried out in your classroom?
- c) Can you tell me how did you prepared your lesson plan for this lesson in particular to make sure it is relevant?
- d) What other things you take into considerations in planning your lesson?
- e) In your lesson plan you stated that.....can you please explain more about it?
- f) What does it mean byin your lesson plan?
- g) In your guided reflection you have stated that.....can you please explain this?
- h) Can you tell me more about.....activity in your classroom?
- i) You have mentioned the use_____in you lesson can you please explain more on it?
- j) How does the activity impact students learning?
- k) when you developed the lesson plan and implement the lesson in your classroom, did you reflect on your cascade training, like how the cascade training helped you in some parts of the lesson? Particularly this lesson that you have submitted to me.
- l) Do you think the training has prepared you for better classroom teaching

APPENDIX D

Teacher Reflection Document

Date	
Theme	
Topic	
Main Skill	
Complementary Skill	
Content standards	Main Skill : Complementary Skill :
Learning Standards	Main skill Complementary skill :
Learning Objectives	Main Skill: Complementary Skill :

	a) Questions	Reflections
Objectives	a) How have I identified the learning objectives of the lesson or unit of work? What am I supposed to achieve at the end of the lesson	
	b) Are the learning objectives measurable? Can they be assessed through observable student behaviours or performance? Explain the measurable outcome of the lesson.	
	c) Are the learning objectives aligned with the CEFR proficiency levels and KSSM syllabus? Explain.	
	d) Have I shared the learning objectives with students and explained why they are important?	
	e) What are the strategies that I used to achieve the learning objectives?	
	f) How did the strategies helped me to achieve the learning objectives?	
	g) How did I evaluate whether the objectives were achieved?	
	b)	
Content	a) Where does this unit fit into the curriculum	

	b) Did the content of the lesson clearly connect to objectives? How?	
	c) Did I use any supplementary materials to enhance the content delivery? If yes, how effective were they?	
	d) Have I ensured that the content is diverse and inclusive, representing a variety of perspectives and experiences?	
	e) How did the content of the lesson help to develop the main skill?	
	f) How did the content of the lesson help to develop the complementary skill?	
	g) How did the content of the lesson address pupils' need in terms of language understanding?	
	h) What did I do to get students to be engaged with the content of the lesson?	
	i) What were the activities that were carried out?	
	j) How did the activities enable pupils to understand the content?	

Learning Experience	a) Have I provided a variety of learning experiences to cater to different learning styles and preferences?	
	b) How will I scaffold the learning experiences to support students as they build knowledge and skills?	
	c) How will I monitor student progress and adjust instruction as needed based on their understanding and feedback?	
	d) Explain how were the learning experiences appropriate for the level of the students?	
	e) How did I provide opportunities for student interaction and collaboration?	
	f) Was students' responses throughout the lesson reflect the learning objectives?	
Evaluation	a) How did my lesson assess pupils' communicative competence?	
	b) How did I use various tools to evaluate pupils' learning	
	c) How did I see progression in terms of language use among pupils?	
	d) How did I align my evaluation to CEFR framework?	

	e) How did my evaluation help me to prepare for my next lesson.	
	f) How will I assess whether students have achieved the learning objectives?	



Guided Reflection Prepared by :

(_____)
Date :

APPENDIX E

LESSON PLAN TEMPLATE

WEEK:		DAY: Choose an item.	DATE: Click here to enter a date.
SUBJECT:	LESSON:		TIME:
FORM/CLASS:			Choose an item.
DURATION:	Choose an item. minutes		Choose an item.
THEME:	Choose an item.		RESOURCES:
TOPIC:	Choose an item.		
FOCUS SKILLS:			
LANGUAGE/ GRAMMAR FOCUS:			ASSESSMENT:
CONTENT STANDARD/S:	Main Skill: Reading Complementary Skill: Speaking		MORAL VALUES:
LEARNING STANDARD/S:	Main Skill: Reading Complementary Skill: Speaking		
LEARNING OBJECTIVES:	Main Reading Complementary Speaking		
SUCCESS CRITERIA :	Main Skill (Reading)\ Complementary Skill (Speaking)		
ACTIVITIES :			<u>FA/Differentiation Strategies</u>
I. PRE LESSON			
II. LESSON DEVELOPMENT – GIST- TASK			Moral Value:
III. DETAILED TASK			
IV. POST-LESSON			FA:
REFLECTION:			
Attendance: /	Number: ___/___ pupils were able to achieve the learning objectives.		
Absent: /	Only ___/___ were not able to achieve the learning objectives. These pupils will be _____		
Truant: /	_____		
School Activity: /	_____		
Follow-up / Reinforcement: PdP could not be conducted and will be postponed due to:			

APPENDIX F

OPEN – ENDED INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPT 1 – MR.ADHAM

Interviewer	<p>.....so a very good day [REDACTED] Thank you for agreeing to participate in this study. So....ehmm..., the purpose of this interview is to gather information about your experiences and perceptions regarding curriculum implementation in the Malaysian Secondary English language Classroom. So, you are free to speak openly and honestly about your experiences....aaand for your information, all the information gathered from this interview will be kept as confidential and your real name will not be revealed throughout the study. A pseudonym name will be used to ensure your privacy, okay, to maintain your privacy. Now, so before we get started, can you just give me a general introduction about yourself?</p>
Adham	<p>Okay, Salam Assalamualaikum and a very good evening. Okay, so my name is [REDACTED] 47 years old. Okay, I've been teaching English for the past 24 years already. Okay, so this is my 24th year and I've been teaching in two schools. My first school was [REDACTED] I have taught there for 12 years and my current school right now is [REDACTED] Okay, I've been teaching there for 12 years already and still there. My experiences in teaching the English language subject, I have taught previously, I think I have taught all the forms, okay, form 1, form 2, form 4, form 3, form 5. I've also taught EST before and I also taught MUET for three years. Okay, so I think I have taught all the levels, okay, all the English subjects available in secondary school. Okay, and I've been also a marker, okay, I've been a marker for MUET Okay, I was a marker for MUET for about, I think, seven times. Then SPM marker and then previously I was also the marker for PMR. Okay, so in terms of experience, I think, I've also, been involved in a few activities, the National Level, and then the State Level and also the district Level.</p> <p>Okay, for example, they ask me for my help, if I am free, then I'll surely help. Okay, apart from that, I think in school, for example, I am the KP, the Ketua panitia, and I have nine teachers under me right now. Okay, so I've been doing my job as a KP for the past, I think eight, nine years already. Okay, that's all.</p>
Interviewer	<p>all right, okay, thank you for the introduction. Now, let us move on to the interview questions, since you have already answered all the questions that I wanted to ask you on your general introduction, so I'll just move on into the next one. Now, first thing, we all have attended the CEFR training, right, the CEFR, when the curriculum was introduced in 2016. Now, so can you describe the training you have received regarding the CEFR -aligned curriculum in this language curriculum implementation?</p>
Adham	<p>I think there were like four courses. Okay. I attended three of the courses myself, okay, I think I went for the first course was the familiarisation course and then the second one was the learning materials adaptation. I did not go for the third course, someone else from my school replaced me, I think it was curriculum induction right? and then the last one was the formative assessment which I went. and then I also did the cascading for the three courses that I went to with my panel members. And I also attended the cascading done by my panel members for the curriculum induction. What I can see is that, for me, I like the most was the curriculum induction. It was very informative. Okay, and we were briefed on what CEFR was all about. These levels of CEFR, okay, and how to go about doing it. For example, we looked at the curriculum framework and then we looked at the DSKP and also the SOW. So I think that was enlightening. It gave me a very clear picture of what CEFR is all about.</p> <p>Okay, however, I think I still need, some information, new knowledge regarding the material adaptation part. Okay, because I think that is what I</p>

	<p>find difficult, especially because I right now currently I'm teaching form one, form four and form five. And I think the form four and the form five textbook, they are, they are quite okay. Okay, they are adequate for me to teach my students. However, my form 1 students, they are having difficulties. Okay, my form 1 students, I teach one Al Farabi, which is the Aliran Agama in my school. So, all of them are Malay - Muslims. And I think the textbook for form one is quite difficult for my students. Okay, because there are some things in there that they are not familiar with. For example, I think it was in unit one or unit two, I'm not sure. It was something on a Fringe festival. My students, they had a hard time understanding what a Fringe festival is and so on, because we don't have this in Malaysia, we don't practice this in our culture and it is difficult for them to understand. whereas the form four and form five textbook, okay, they are ok but still some parts are difficult. Okay, but it is easier for me to adapt.</p>
Interviewer	<p>Alright, thank you. My next question is, what aspects of the training did you find most helpful in understanding the curriculum?</p>
Adham	<p>What aspect of the training? so I then understand that I have to see the SOW and also the textbook...that's how the trainers actually teach us on how to designing the lesson plan....and after that course...I changed my way of preparing my lesson....okay I actually can see of what my student can achieve when plan my lesson with the 'standard kandungan' and also referring to the textbook.... I think I develop my lessons better after the course. My objectives are much clearer, and I learn to write more specific so I could see how my students are progressing during the lesson okay. So that is a good aspect. And that is what I imparted to my panel members as well. So I think that was the good thing, which I think we should be, we should give more emphasis to actually because for me, myself in my school, my teachers, they are all ingrained in doing the old ways, you know, in doing the old lesson plan and so on, the old ways of doing the lesson plan and so on.</p> <p>Okay, right now we have also many things that we have to include in our lesson plan, especially for example, if your school is involved with this TS25, and so on, we have to include so many things. So I think that is something that can be incorporated in the courses itself. It will make it easier for the teachers to cascade to our panel members and so on.</p>
Interviewer	<p>based on the training that you have received, okay, on the CEFR, you have attended three courses, right? Now, can you please elaborate what have you understood about the implementation of the CEFR -Aligned curriculum in classroom?</p>
Adham	<p>Okay, so I think CEFR is different to our previous case KSSM. Okay, and because CEFR is more, what about that? It is more focused on what the students can do and that is a good thing. Okay, because to me, when we focus more on what the student can do, rather than what the student cannot do, then we are actually giving them motivation to actually go further, to enhance themselves, okay, in terms of their linguistic and language ability. So that is what is good about it. I can see in the classroom, we allow our students to explore their capabilities, to explore their interests. Okay, at the same time, we help them to develop their language, their confidence in using the language itself and so on. So that is what I can see, okay? Because before this, we don't see that. Okay, and then we always look at things that the student cannot do, things that the student can do. But here, CEFR is more focused on what they can do.</p> <p>And then there is a level of progression, okay. As we do our activities with them and so on, we can see that they are progressing, okay, they are able to</p>

	<p>do this, again, and then they are able to do this and also something else, that is of a higher level.</p> <p>So we can see the student's progress, it's easier for the teachers. Okay, So with the CEFR alignment curriculum, we can look at the can do statement and we can better assess our students and we can actually easily see their progress. That is for me.</p>
Interviewer	<p>Okay, thank you. My next question. Now, can you describe any challenges you faced in understanding the curriculum and how you overcame those challenges? I'm sure, you told me one already just now, like you said that your students had difficulty understanding the text, right? so any other challenges you faced in understanding yourself in the curriculum and how you overcame these challenges?</p>
Adham	<p>Okay, yes, sometimes I do find it difficult to understand what this thought is, what is inside the curriculum. So what I would do is usually our panel members, okay, my school, the panel members in my school will get together and we would discuss, okay. So we will have like what a small PLC session, And then whatever that we do not know, maybe someone else in the panel would know and he or she will give the answers.</p> <p>So we learn through others as well. And then I am also very lucky because I have people that I can refer to, for example, like you, and also friends, okay? Other friends that I can refer to, sometimes I will ask these friends who are also trainers.</p> <p>I refer to them, Because I know they are the experts in their field, okay? So, I would refer to them also and then I would also go through the internet, For example, I would read articles written by Guru Cemerlang in their blogs on teaching practices related to the current curriculum, I will look at these ideas and actually try to adapt them.</p> <p>I will also read materials. And then there is also telegram group which I will get a lot of info on things that I don't know. I will look through the materials provided in the group and adapt them in my lessons. Then sometimes, I think I asked questions inside the group and some teachers from other states, they were very willing to answer. So that is how I would go about, okay? Other than that, If I have any queries, anything that I am not sure of, I will try to get answers from the JPN officers concerned to get better input from them.</p>
Interviewer	<p>okay, did the training sessions actually meet your expectations in understanding the curriculum?</p>
Adham	<p>during the first session, the CEFR familiarisation course, I still had queries and things that I still did not understand, but as I went through the other three courses, especially the curriculum induction, I think many of the questions that I had in my mind were answered at that time. And also okay, when I was asked to go for the course, I feel that I don't really need to learn lesson planning as I was already aware about it okay, but then, during the cascade training course, I learn the importance of having designing my lesson properly objectives okay...so that I know how teach my lesson properly. Okay, and I also had JUs, during the CEFR courses, Okay,...and I also had trainers during the CEFR courses, who manage to answer the question that the participants ask them. Okay, so I think the training was very helpful in making me understand the curriculum. then there were also one or two questions that they did not know the answer to, but they did get in touch with the JU kebangsaan, and so on, and then they informed us about</p>

	things that we asked. So that is one good thing, that we managed to get from the courses and the trainers making me understand the curriculum.
Interviewer	Okay, my next question, do you think the training or the cascade training that you have attended, did actually prepare you to implement the curriculum?
Adham	<p>Okay, for me, yes because I think the curriculum courses, the CEFR courses, they were quite detailed, I learn many new things in the cascade training programme okay, for me I can get a clear picture of how I can be more student-centred when carrying out my lessons and I understand that autonomous learning is important and...okay to do that I can actually have more student – centred activities like project – based learning which help my learners to explore the language deeper and provide opportunities for them to explore the language. I think what the problem is that when we do the cascading in school. We went for the course for three days to four days, right, but then when we want to do the cascade in school, we don't have like three or four days. We don't have enough time, actually, we cannot fully follow what is being done, what was done to us, during the in-school cascading. So sometimes what will happen is the teachers, they may not understand a few things and will be asking me again and again about this and so on. So sometimes I do have to like come back to them, show them what to do and so on.</p> <p>Even when the cascading was done by my partner, okay, during the curriculum induction, I did have to ask a few times, about learning materials adaptation. So, I did have to ask a few times, how do we go about adapting this and so on. So, in terms of the course being done at the district level, I think it's not a problem, it's quite detailed, okay, we were given enough time, but when we are talking about the cascading in school, then it is a problem, because we are not given enough time. Certain schools, they had it like a few times, but certain schools, they had it only like one time and then it was only for one day. They would not have time to do all the activities that were cascaded to us.</p>
Interviewer	now, how has the implementation of CEFR- aligned curriculum, so we have started, using the CEFR-aligned curriculum since 2016, starting with form one till form five. The first two batches have set for SPM. Now, my question is, how has this CEFR aligned curriculum has impacted your teaching practices?
Adham	<p>Okay, I think first... because CEFR tests on all four skills.before this, I concentrated more on reading and writing only. And I did not do so much speaking and also listening.</p> <p>But because CEFR focuses on all four aspects equally, I had to change my way of teaching. I had to include listening and speaking as well. And I had to give equal importance to them as well. So my students also, they had to like before this, they may do only like the oral test maybe once or twice a year. But now, they are having more activities on speaking and listening. So, in one way I think it is a good thing because we are developing their language ability in all aspects. Before this, we can have students who are good writers, but they could not speak.</p> <p>But now, we can have students who are good writers at the same time they are able to speak well as well. Due to the fact that they have more</p>

	<p>opportunities to speak and to do the listening activities in class. So, I think and also the textbook, if you look at the textbook, yes, the listening and speaking activities are there in the textbook. For all unit, we have that. I think sometimes in one unit, you have two or three activities on listening and also on speaking. So when I did that with my students, they open up. And I think at the same time, their confidence in speaking, it was boosted and so on. So in a way, I think we are producing a more rounded students, for language learning.</p>
Interviewer	<p>Okay, now, I'm going to ask you about, now, when you implement, after your training courses have ended and so on, you went back to school and we started implementing the new curriculum. Now, can you describe any challenges or obstacles that you faced in implementing the curriculum after the professional development courses or the cascade training?</p>
Adham	<p>Okay, for example, the speaking activities, writing and also reading, it was not a problem. But what we had a problem with was the, what about that, listening activities. For one thing, there were not enough materials for listening to be done. So we had to outsource from other books, not from the Malaysian curriculum.</p> <p>So for example, we had to go to the internet, get materials from books from England and so on, go to British council, adapt the materials that they have over there. So that is what the teachers had to do. So, in my school, I would be the one doing the, the adaptation of the materials and then I would distribute to the others. Then, I also try to get extra materials to support learning okay,...okay sometimes I use games such as boardgames or even online educational games like paper quizzizz in classroom to get my students to be engaged. So one thing that I think, was a challenge to me was to adapt materials that was suitable for my students. Because high school students, they are mostly lower to mid in terms of their English proficiency. Maybe the first two classes will be good in English, the rest, they are not so good. There are even some who cannot even speak English at all, some who cannot even speak the Bahasa Malaysia, the national language at all. So that is a challenge for me to teach them.</p> <p>One thing to teach them fully in English is also a problem. Previously, what I had to do is I had to like, everything I say to them, I would speak in English first and then I will have to translate the whole thing to Malay. And then also when I teach the end classes, I would have one student there who is also quite good in English, or B.M. where he or she would speak in Chinese in Mandarin to the guy who doesn't understand English. So that was a challenge when I started teaching.</p> <p>But I think right now the students, even if you speak fully in English, they are able to understand as time goes by. They are more exposed to the language now. So, they are able to understand.</p>
Interviewer	<p>all right. Now, can you remember any specific strategies that you have been taught or you have learned in the cascade training that actually been very helpful in your classroom practice?</p>
Adham	<p>So, I think the materials adaptation course helped a lot, where we had to find, for example, like cultural aspects that are convenient to the student, we have to like use all materials there, only change the cultural aspect. So we had to do some materials adaptation. So I think that is one thing that I find, that the course really helped with that. So, we could either adapt the</p>

	materials, or we adapt, the focus, the skills, that we are actually testing the student. So that is one thing that I find, helpful to me.
Interviewer	How confident did you feel about implementing the new curriculum in your classroom after attending the course?
Adham	Okay, to say that I am 100% confident, no. because, during that time, there were not enough materials that we can find. So at that time, I think, I will be like 75% sure of what I was doing. Okay, but there are still things that I would have questioned about, I would have queries. So that is why I would refer to people that I know, okay, those who are JUs, for example, I would ask them, and then I would also go to the internet, okay, telegram group and so on, and ask questions over there. Okay, so what I would do is I would try to get materials from other people, and I would adapt that materials to suit my students, because sometimes the material will be quite difficult. Okay, so I have to like change here and there, and just change the language a little bit here and there, so that my students are able to use that materials in class.
Interviewer	Okay, my next question, are there any specific areas of the curriculum that you feel that you are less prepared to teach even after attending the professional development courses?
Adham	Okay, I think the most difficult aspect to me, is actually the, the listening skill because that is something that is new...not just to the student, but also to the teachers, because before this, in our old curriculum, we don't have that. When I was a student, I had the oral test, so in terms of speaking, it was not so difficult, okay, but listening was a difficult thing, because we had no experience with that aspect of the language, in terms of it being tested and the student themselves also had difficulty. I think, when we first had the listening part, most of the materials, the recording were from England, and my student, even to understand the Malaysian English is difficult enough. To understand posh British English is even harder for them, okay, so sometimes, for example, I think both of us, if we listen to what the recording is saying, we can understand, but to my student, it will be like, it's so posh, they don't understand. So that is one aspect that they had to learn, they had to familiarise themselves. because they were not used to hearing English being spoken, by the native speakers, they were used to us speaking English with them in the Malaysian context, the English, most of us, were from the Malaysian.
Interviewer	How had the trainings, or how did the cascade training, actually like the cascade training that you attended, help you to integrate curriculum into your classroom practices?
Adham	Okay, I think the training actually helped us to prepare our lesson plan. So, when we did the training, okay, we were asked to look at the curriculum framework and then we were asked to look at the DSKP. Then one thing that was good was that we were also given the SOW which is actually a lesson plan that we can actually follow. So that thing was good because many teachers including myself, We actually referred to the SOW a lot when we first started. So we did the adaptation we change here and there. We are now more confident to the point that we don't actually look at the SOW anymore.

	<p>We can even device our own SoW to suit our students. Okay, so that is what I think is something that was taught to us during cascading program that has been beneficial to the teachers. And we now know how to adapt the materials and we now know what to write properly in terms of our lesson plan.</p>
Interviewer	<p>how did you feel about the professional development courses for the implementation of the CEFR aligned curriculum. Now, were there any strengths or weaknesses that stood out to you based on the training that you attended? What do you basically generally feel about the professional development courses?</p>
Adham	<p>Okay, so I think the strength is that the materials given to us. Okay, they are quite comprehensive. Okay, I don't have difficulties understanding them. Okay, but sometimes what I would say is that we did not have enough time. Okay, I think the courses should be held longer and it should be more detailed. Okay, and then I'm not disparaging anyone.</p> <p>Okay, but sometimes because I've been also a facilitator myself. Okay, I know that we are not perfect. Okay, but sometimes in terms of the facilitators or the JU chosen, Okay, some of them were very knowledgeable and some of them would try to avoid answering your question. So these kind of people, for example, like other participants like myself also sometimes we feel demotivated when attending the course because sometimes we are left in the dark. You know, we ask a question but it was not answered. Okay, and then when we did our program when we did our mini teaching micro teaching and so on, there were not enough feedback given. Okay, I'm not saying about all just a few. The majority were all good. So maybe in terms of selection of the training of them can be better.</p>
Interviewer	<p>In terms of the content of the training, were there any issues in terms of the content?</p>
Adham	<p>In terms of the content, I don't have a problem with that because I think the content, okay, they are okay.</p> <p>They are well organized. They are detailed. Okay, but sometimes from my experience, other teachers during the course they had difficulty in understanding the content. Especially those who are not familiar with international situation or culture and so on. So they had difficulty understanding that, during the course itself. I think one or two teachers I heard complaining about this content is not relevant to, our Malaysian environment. So they kept saying that. It was actually it's when they kept saying that it's actually demotivating the others as well.</p> <p>Because sometimes they will be talking about themselves and they will be influencing the others as well. For example, my way is that even if I know something or even if I don't know something when they ask me to participate, I will participate. For me it is Okay, if I get the right or the wrong answer. It's okay because I'm learning. Some people refuse to do that, they go for the course but they are not really there in terms of their mind, their spirit. They are not spiritually there, they are somewhere else actually. There will be a problem when they go back to their school and they do the cascade training.</p>
Interviewer	<p>Ah, yes. That's the way the issue starts, right? Now, my next question, can you suggest any improvements to the cascade training model or the training program that was done to better support English language teachers in future?</p>

	<p>Now, for example, by 2025, we are coming to end of the first cycle already and definitely there's going to be changes and improvements. So, when they do these kinds of improvements and they do training in future in 2025, now what are the things that you can suggest as improvements for the cascade training model that you think? So, from your point of view, what do you think improvement that can be done?</p>
Adham	<p>Okay, one thing is that the cascading should be done, in stages. It should be done in stages because sometimes we would find it difficult to absorb everything at one go.</p> <p>So, maybe it can be done in a gradual way, especially for older teachers like us, like myself. Okay, we need time to absorb. Okay, and then also, I would say that if possible, the cascading should be, I think more people should be involved in the cascading, not just one teacher from one school. Maybe if we have like two or three teachers from one school so that the information will not be diluted when we go to school. Even the JU, they are doing it in a team, right? They will do the cascading in a team of two or three of them. But for us, when we go to school, we are the only ones who are doing the cascading. Everything falls on us. If there are more teachers involved with the cascading program in, for example, at the district level, when they go back to school, they will not be so pressured, you know, they will not be so stressed having to handle everything themselves alone.</p>
Interviewer	<p>This is a very good suggestion.</p> <p>Yeah, I never thought of this like, you know, if one person goes for the cascade, it's like everything is on you. If like two person, at least you can complement one another, right? If you missed out something, the other person can actually. Yeah, that's right.</p>
Adham	<p>Okay, I think that will be my suggestion to have more teachers involved with the skating in this three and also state level.</p>
Interviewer	<p>my next question. What could be done better to support teachers in implementing the curriculum after completing the professional development courses? Now, just now I asked on how the improvements should be done, okay, on the cascade training.</p> <p>Now, after the training, like, let's say we have completed the training, we have finished the training, okay? We teachers need to be supported, okay, right? So what could be done better support teachers after this professional development courses or after the state training?</p>
Adham	<p>Okay, one thing I think they should be like a group, okay, a group where we can share our opinion, where we can share our problems and also our solutions.</p> <p>Okay, so if there is such a group, then it will be better. Okay, the teachers will have more confidence, especially when we go back to school to do the cascading and so on. We have other friends who can help us. Atleast, there is an avenue for us to discuss.</p> <p>And also, I think that the materials given, okay, they should be, I know, it is actually a lot to ask, but the material given should be more detailed. Most of the materials, they are quite general. We have to find extra information elsewhere, right? Okay, so that is what I would suggest.</p>

	I know, one more, maybe they like, we have a refresher course from time to time.
Interviewer	How often do you think refreshers course should be done?
Adham	<p>Maybe I think once every two years. Not on all aspects, certain aspects only, right?</p> <p>techniques, OK, and then changes in the curriculum, for example, I heard, like they are now doing, what about that, changes to the textbook, right? So there will be new textbook coming up later, right?</p> <p>So that text, OK, so those kind of things, if they are changes and so on, the information should be spread to us, should be given to us much earlier, so that we are not caught by surprise.</p>
Interviewer	How would you rate the effectiveness of the professional development courses in preparing you for the implementation of the CEFR, aligned curriculum, for example, like rate from out of 10.
Adham	<p>Yeah, on a scale of 1 to 10, I would give about 8 or 8 and a half. OK, so far, what I would say, I got good JUs. They helped me a lot to understand. There was only like one that I'm not so, not so enamoured. The rest of they were all, informative and then good. We were able to get information from them in a very comprehensive way and most of them were very good.</p>
Interviewer	OK, now, can you describe your current, OK, classroom practices related to curriculum implementation?
Adham	<p>OK, I think, because teaching form 4, form 5 and form 1, I think 95% of the time, 95- 97% of the time, I would be using the textbook. And then I would be using, for example, teaching aids, like projector, like my laptop. I would be using PowerPoints that I have sourced as well. And then I would use that with the textbook in terms of teaching the students in class. Because I find that this textbook that we have right now is actually adequate to prepare the student for exam. Only that we have to make certain changes.</p> <p>For example, if you look at the textbook, I would not follow what is given in the textbook, I would follow what is given in the exam format. So, I will say today, OK, you have to write this much and this much. However, I will tell them, OK, this is just a figure. They can actually go more a little bit here and there are no problems. But usually what I would do is I would ask the student to do the activities from the textbook. And then I would discuss with them. And then, for example, we do all the writing exercises and so on, then I will give extra instruction to them. So that they understand the exam format. OK, all right. I'm preparing them for the exam as well.</p>
Interviewer	OK, now are there any areas of your classroom practice that you feel could be improved to better align with the curriculum?
Adham	<p>Of course, because we are not perfect, I'm not perfect. So what I think is that I don't have enough writing practices with them okay. I concentrated more on reading and speaking because I like my students to speak. Because my school most of them are Malay and Chinese students and they can write and read well but bad they cannot speak well. So most of the time in my class I want my student to speak up even if they speak using the wrong word or incorrect grammar or inapt vocab and so on. But I want them to speak up so I will always encourage them to speak up so maybe in terms of writing I am not so much into it. So, I think what I like is that I would after this I will</p>

	concentrate on writing. Usually what I would do is at the end of the year two or three months before examination, I will concentrate more on writing because during that time I think the students are able to remember much okay. Earlier the year I will concentrate more on reading and also speaking because I want my student to speak up I want to build their confidence.
Interviewer	okay all right now let's say in terms of support okay for your classroom practices now as a teacher or classroom practitioner what are the support you feel that you need okay for better classroom practice like let's say if you want to ask for support from the Ministry of Education or BPK, BPG what are the support that you feel that you need for better classroom practice in implementing the current curriculum
Adham	<p>okay maybe there should be like courses for teachers. This course I think should focus more on how to go about adapting the textbook to suit the student okay. This is because I think the textbook like I said to you before, the form 1 textbook, my students, they don't like the form 1 textbook because to them, all the things inside the textbook are unfamiliar. And then also it is actually to my form 1 students it is actually of a higher level to them.</p> <p>So, if possible okay, they should be courses where teachers are taught how to implement differentiation activities or strategies for students based on the textbook. That kind of course would be good for teachers like me because I need to do lesson plan for different levels of students especially my form one. Most of them are Malays they are not familiar with English okay and most of the time they will try to speak to me in Bahasa Malaysia you know. I will ask them a question English they will answer in Bahasa Malaysia. I will tell them to speak in English if you speak in Bahasa Malaysia you will not be sitting down in my class. I had to do it like that you know so, those who can answer will sit down. Those who want to sit down will be the one answering the questions. The others who are quite shy they don't want to speak up they will be last person to sit down. This is because, some of the students, they are not familiar with the textbook they are not familiar with the content of the textbook. They sometimes find it difficult to answer the question. So that's why I said material adaptation courses should be implemented especially the differentiation strategies for our teachers. And how about doing it because that one is something I think many of us are not that familiar with we were told to do it okay we were told to do the differentiation strategies in class but we are not actually taught how to go about doing.</p>
Interviewer	What recommendations do you have for teachers to improve their classroom practices and better align with the curriculum?
Adham	<p>Okay, one thing that I would suggest teachers to do is that they should not be, complacent. They should try to ask for help if they don't know anything because some teachers, they don't know what to do, but they don't want to ask people for help. Now, even if you don't want to ask people for help, there are few avenues you know that you can go to, look for what you need. For example, I myself, when I want to find materials and so on, I would go to the website or British Council, I would try to find materials from there that I can use for my students.</p> <p>Okay, sometimes I will change the materials I will take it and then I will make changes to the materials to suite my students. Maybe I will change the</p>

	<p>name of the student, the characters inside there, okay, and so on, so that it suits my student.</p> <p>So I think teachers, they should not be complacent and sometimes you have to like lower your ego a little bit, you have to ask for help. Okay, some people, they think that they know everything, they don't want to ask for help, but in the end they are actually, being detrimental to their student because they don't know, but they still don't want to ask, they still don't want to learn.</p> <p>and these students will suffer because when I, for example, when I visit other school to conduct workshops and so on, there are still student who do, the wrong things, and they are still doing things that they did during KBSM days okay, not CEFR.</p> <p>So this thing, sometimes the teachers been teaching the wrong thing because the teachers don't want to ask. Yeah, so that is one thing that I think the teachers should, try to avoid, okay, because we are always learning, I try to just follow, for example, I just follow the CEFR telegram group and so on, any new material I will read, I will try to understand. I may be a silent reader there, but at least when you are in such a group, you will learn things, and they will be sharing. In fact, a lot of sharing that you can actually learn from. So teachers, I think, don't put yourself on high pedestal, think of yourself as a student also, you are always learning, okay, and try to get as much information, as much knowledge that you can, because you are not only helping yourself, you are also going to help your student with that, right, okay, that's all.</p>
Interviewer	Any other suggestions?
Adham	Okay, I have been an expert Microsoft innovative educator and becoming one helps me to make my lessons more interesting and engaging, so I suggest teachers should take up educational technology courses like this to improve their teaching skills and learn skills to integrate the English language lessons with technology.
Interviewer	Okay, I think we have come to an end of our interview session, now thank you so much for your participation in this interview, your input will be valuable in understanding teachers' experiences and perception in implementing the curriculum, CEFR aligned curriculum, in the Malaysian secondary English language classroom, thank you so much.

_____ hereby acknowledge that I have reviewed the transcript of the interview conducted with me by Mohana Ram a/l Murugiah on 20th September 2023, for the purpose of the study entitled Teachers' understanding of curriculum implementation in Malaysian secondary English language classroom. I confirm that the transcript is a true and accurate representation of the interview and accurately reflects my statements and opinions as provided during the interview. I affirm that the statements recorded in the transcript are my own and consent to their use for the research study.

Interviewee's Signature: _____

Name: _____

Date: _____

Interviewer's Signature: _____

Name: Mohana Ram Murugiah

Date: 1/10/2023

APPENDIX G

OPEN – ENDED INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPT 2 – MR.ADHAM

Interviewer	Hi, glad to meet you again.
Adham	Hmmm... ya...ok
Interviewer	Shall we start?
Adham	Yes, Sure.
Interviewer	First of all thanks for completing a lesson and providing me with your lesson plan, lesson documents and a reflection on what happened in your classroom.
Adham	Ya its ok.
Interviewer	Can you first tell me what your lesson is about?
Adham	Ahh..mine is a reading lesson. The main skill and the complementary skills both focussing on speaking skills.
Interviewer	Can you tell me some of the activities that was carried out in your classroom?
Adham	Okay ya sure, basically the lesson focus on reading skills, so I ask the students to go through the idioms, I played the idioms and they listened to idioms in conversations, then I discuss with the meaning of the idioms, okay,, I did this because there are some idioms in the text where students might find it difficult so I make sure they know what it is before I start the reading...okay for the reading part, I ask students to read individually and then I put them in small groups for them, I assigned them a few questions where they need to think and discuss and answer, this is for them to provide specific details from the text as stated in the lesson documents.
Interviewer	Can you tell me how did you prepared your lesson plan for this lesson in particular to make sure it is relevant?
Adham	ah okay...hmmmm..In order to make my lesson plan relevant, at the early stage of building the lesson, I use the keywords in the CS and LS itself to actually develop my lesson so that..... I will not deviate from the curriculum and stick to what I suppose to teach and achieve, the goal of the curriculum. These are some of the strategies that I have learnt during the cascade training programme
Interviewer	What other things that you take into considerations in planning your lesson?
Adham	Hurmm.....okay when planning for the lesson, I always think back what happened in my lesson before this and the activities for the next lesson. This was one input given during the cascade. I will adjust based on what they can do in the previous lesson, if there are anything I feel need to change I will change
Interviewer	Ok, now in your guided reflection you stated that you would include PBL in your lesson, can you elaborate more on that?
Adham	Okay as I said earlier project-based learning got a lot of elements that is highlighted in the CEFR-aligned curriculum.... And...erh..creative and critical thinking skills is part of it okay... I carry out project-based learning at a very small scale. I tried doing simple projects suggested in the Fullblast or English download textbooks with my students just to

	get them thinking and to decide solutions.....erm but I don't do it all the time as we don't have enough time to cover the syllabus.
Interviewer	Can you tell me about on simple project that you have done before?
Adham	Okay, I once asked my students to look for people in different professions such as doctors, lawyers, engineers and okay maybe teachers too and asked them to do interview with these people and then do a presentation to other students in the class, the reason I did this because I want the students to get more used to speaking English other than in the class...students did the projects well.
Interviewer	That is interesting...
Adham	Hahaha...ya thank you..
Interviewer	Now when you develop the lesson plan and implement the lesson in your classroom, did you like reflect on your cascade training, like how the cascade training helped you in some parts of the lesson?
Adham	Okay, Yes, I.... a lot of parts actually I got the ideas from the cascade training.Okay,, arrrr...it may have some problems or hiccups but I think I gained a lot from the cascade training okay... it actually gave me confidence in exploring the new curriculum..and based on that confidence I could think what I do in my classroom is right and I can freely carryout my lesson without worrying going wrong.
Interviewer	So you think that the training has completely prepared your for the classroom practices?
Adham	Hmmm okay ' okay the training was carried out for three days okay and it was too short of a time, hurmm.....they should have done it in phases for a longer period of time so that teachers had time to digest the content. I think I would have become better teacher if the training was more comprehensive.
Interviewer	You have mentioned on the use of mind – map in your reading lesson, how does it help the learning?
Adham	Okay, the lesson require student to understand and pvide specific details, and then also they need to understand the writer's opinion, as they read okay, they will find information on this things and I have given some parts on the mind maps that they will fill in with all the relevant information from the text in the mindmap that will make it easier for them to understand what they are learning and easy for me to see how they have understood.
Interviewer	Alright...you mentioned in the reflection that your did not use any other extra materials for this lesson? Why is it so?
Adham	Okay, because I think the materials in the textbook was sufficient for this lesson, and the content was not that difficult for students to understand and there were quite a number of activities that I can do, so I don't think I need extra worksheets, but I made sure I have few activities to keep students engaged.
Interviewer	Is this the case in all your lessons?

Adham	No no, okay, some of the lessons, I will adopt and adapt depends on how my students can understand the content, if the content is too difficult I will find something simpler for my students to understand the lesson better. Sometimes I create my own worksheets and also download some from the internet, from the British council website also.
Interviewer	So are you happy with the outcome of this particular lesson?
Adham	Yes, Okay, because to me, when we focus more on what the student can do, rather than what the student cannot do, then we are actually giving them motivation to actually go further, to enhance themselves, okay, in terms of their linguistic and language ability. So that is what is good about my lesson. I can see in the classroom, I allow my students to explore their capabilities, to explore their interests. Okay, at the same time, we help them to develop their language, their confidence in using the language itself and so on'
Interviewer	Is the anything else that you want to add?
Adham	Ermm...okay...so far nothing I think.
Interviewer	Okay. That is the end of our second interview session and thank you so much in your commitment for this studies.
Adham	Okay, you are always welcome and thanks for this opportunity.

I, [REDACTED] hereby acknowledge that I have reviewed the transcript of the interview conducted with me by Mohana Ram a/I Murugiah on 3rd October 2023, for the purpose of the study entitled Teachers' understanding of curriculum implementation in Malaysian secondary English language classroom. I confirm that the transcript is a true and accurate representation of the interview and accurately reflects my statements and opinions as provided during the interview. I affirm that the statements recorded in the transcript are my own and consent to their use for the research study.

Interviewee's Signature: [REDACTED]

Name : [REDACTED]

Date: [REDACTED]

Interviewer's Signature: Mohana Ram

Name : Mohana Ram Murugiah

Date: 12/10/2023

APPENDIX H

GUIDED REFLECTION – MR. LIM

Date	26/9/2023
Theme	Science and Technology
Topic	The Media
Main Skill	Reading
Complementary Skill	Reading
Content standards	<p>Main Skill: Reading 3.1 Understand a variety of text by using a range of appropriate reading strategies to construct meaning</p> <p>Complementary Skill: Reading 3.1 Understand a variety of text by using a range of appropriate reading strategies to construct meaning</p>
Learning Standards	<p>Main Skill: Reading 3.1.5 Recognise independently the attitude or opinion of the writer in extended texts on a wide range of familiar topics and some unfamiliar contexts</p> <p>Complementary Skill: Reading 3.1.2 Understand specific details and information in extended texts on a wide range of familiar topics and some unfamiliar contexts</p>
Learning Objectives	<p>Main Reading</p> <p>a) At the end of the lesson pupils should be able to recognise the attitude of the writer in the text 'Is print media doomed?' by skimming for keywords that reflect the attitude</p> <p>b) By the end of the lesson, pupils will be able to show understanding of specific details and information in the text 'Is print media doomed?' by locating keywords that are similar in the questions and options in order to answer six multiple choice questions</p>



	Questions	Reflections
Objectives	<p>a) How have I identified the learning objectives of the lesson or unit of work? What am I supposed to achieve at the end of the lesson</p>	<p>I identified the learning objectives based on the textbook the SOW and the lesson documents given by the Ministry. The objective is to complete the reading activities. At the end of the lesson, students should be able to show that they have understood the text by answering questions related to the reading task .</p>
	<p>b) Are the learning objectives measurable? Can they be assessed through observable student behaviours or performance? Explain the measurable outcome of the lesson.</p>	<p>The learning objectives are measurable as the students are required to complete the exercises and answer questions based on the text which shows how they recognize the attitude of the writer and display their understanding of the text. The measurable learning objectives are measured in terms of how students have answered and provide specific details on the text. Besides, the way students discuss the answers with their friends are also taken into consideration as learning outcome based on what they say, how they say and what type of language they use. For example, the use of cohesive devices and suitable vocabulary on the outcome of their reading</p>
	<p>c) Are the learning objectives aligned with the CEFR proficiency levels and KSSM syllabus? Explain.</p>	<p>I believe the objectives are aligned with the CEFR proficiency levels and KSSM syllabus as I followed the SOW and the SOW is aligned with the textbook. The learning objective follows the content standard and curriculum standard in the SOW. So, I believe I have written my learning objectives aligning with the proficiency levels and KSSM Syllabus.</p>
	<p>d) Have I shared the learning objectives with students and explained why they are important?</p>	<p>Yes I did. It is to encourage students to take more control of their learning. They will know what and why they are learning.</p>

	e) What are the strategies that I used to achieve the learning objectives?	<p>Firstly, I highlighted some phrase/idioms through a listening task in audio and discuss the meaning first so that the students understand the reading text better when they encounter those phrases. Other than that, I also design this lesson, by also looking into their previous understanding of the lesson. Because it helps me to continuously look at their progress</p> <p>The exercises provided a structure for the lesson and allowed me to cover the necessary content. The discussion task after reading for instance allow students to develop their higher-order thinking skills.</p>
	f) How did the strategies helped me to achieve the learning objectives?	
	g) How did I evaluate whether the objectives were achieved?	I evaluate whether the objectives were achieved based on the responses that the students give in tasks given as well as in the discussion and also the completion of the task given.
	a) Where does this unit fit into the curriculum	This unit is part of the reading component of the English language curriculum. The language level used in this task is at B1 mid which is in accordance to the textbook. The reading skill designed for this lesson are at intermediate level, that suits my students' language proficiency. My students can handle the tasks and it is not too challenging and too easy as well.
Content	b) Did the content of the lesson clearly connect to objectives? How?	The content of the lesson is based on the textbook provided by the school and is supposed to cover the specific reading skill on recognising the attitude of the writer in expressing his opinion in written form and also understand specific details implicitly and explicitly and able to express their understanding to one another. Yes, the content of the lesson is connected to the learning objectives.
	c) Did I use any supplementary materials to enhance the content delivery? If yes, how effective were they?	I did not use any supplementary materials for this lesson as the textbook provided by the school was sufficient for the lesson, but I made sure, there were always some activities that involve students to do discussions or even simple projects that would develop their language skills along with their thinking skills. When I teach this is what I want to happen.

	d) How did the content of the lesson help to develop the main skill?	The content of the lesson focused on the text reading, and comprehending the text, as well as trying to make a point on the opinion of the writer and then completing the exercises provided in the textbook was meant to help develop these skills.
	e) How did the content of the lesson help to develop the complementary skill?	The content of the lesson was supposed to help develop the complementary skill of reading. Students speak based on the task given and elaborate ideas further which helped them to improve their understanding by verbalising the content.
	g) What did I do to get students to be engaged with the content of the lesson?	I prepared a mind map, highlight phrases and discuss first the meanings before starting the reading activity. These are some examples of the formative assessment. The formative assessment methods I used in this lesson were something that I gained from the cascade training and have been improvising in my lessons. All these activities were to engage the students with the content of the lesson.
	h) How do I know students understood the content.	I am able to see their way of communicating and confident body language shown. They also able to circle the correct answers and discuss the content of the text better.
Learning Experience	a) Have I provided a variety of learning experiences to cater to different learning styles and preferences?	I provided some variety in learning experiences, such as completing a mind map, and giving open and close-ended questions. However, these activities may not have catered to all learning styles and preferences. I am unable to cater to all due to time constraints during the lesson.

	b) Did I try anything new in my lesson to build the language skills?	I did not try any new ideas in my lesson, these ideas are something that I have been practicing for a while and have been comfortable with.
	c) Did I give space to my students to think and interact with me on the learning content?	Of course! I gave plenty of opportunities for students to discuss and share with me on their ideas about the content of the lesson. The activities outlined in the lesson plan are interactive and thoughtful. They provide opportunities for students to think critically and have meaningful interactions with teachers.
	d) Did I allow students to express their understanding of the lesson? How did they do it?	Yes, they interact, discuss and share with me what they understand from the text and when I do open – ended and close ended questions and students are encouraged to articulate and demonstrate what they have learned.
	e) How did I provide opportunities for student interaction and collaboration?	I provided some opportunities for student interaction through class discussion, but I also created more chances for students to work together or share their thoughts and opinions.
	f) Was students' responses throughout the lesson reflect the learning objectives?	Students' responses reflected the learning objectives, as they did the activities given. They completed the tasks given on time.
Evaluation	a) How did my lesson assess pupils' communicative competence?	My lesson attempted to assess pupils' communicative competence through the class discussion, but the speaking component could have been more comprehensive to better evaluate their abilities.

	b) How did I use various tools to evaluate pupils' learning	<p>The tools I use are mind map and simple worksheet. The combination of these tools allows for a comprehensive evaluation of students' learning, covering different aspects of language understanding and communicative competence. And also, I do carry out test at times just to check whether students have mastered whatever they have learned so far, but that is not my primary source to determine the level of students understanding, I know test is important but I don't rely on it completely and I use it as a tool to see what I can do next to help my students. After we finish the task in textbook, we continue with another listening activity. I play a podcast on the roles of social media among the younger generation today. I ask students to listen and summarise the idea and also identify the speakers' intention and implicit messages in the podcast. This is one way I familiarise students with other materials and also allow them to think deeper into the issue.....this activity I learnt while preparing a task at the cascade training"</p> <p>c) How did I see progression in terms of language use among pupils?</p> <p>I observed progression in terms of language use during the lesson in terms of phrases/idioms used in the audio conversation and even during the speaking discussion.</p> <p>d) How did my evaluation help me to prepare for my next lesson.</p> <p>My evaluation provided some insight into areas that need improvement, which can help me adjust my approach and better support students' learning in the next lesson.</p> <p>e) How will I assess whether students have achieved the learning objectives?</p> <p>I will assess students' achievement of learning objectives by evaluating their participation and understanding during class through all the tasks that they have done as mentioned above.</p>
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My Reflection :

I decided to try to use mind maps instead of brainstorming because I think that mind maps enabled them to organize words and phrases into well arranged units. The fact that the students still needed some language support I pre-taught key phrases. Before doing the reading task we tried to predict what are the meaning of certain phrases and idioms could be because I believe that the strategy is very useful in order for the students to understand the description in the text better and easier for them to get the right answers. Reading is the key to effective communication because without the ability to listen and speak effectively, messages are easily misunderstood.


Guided Reflection Prepared by :



APPENDIX I

LESSON PLAN SAMPLE

WEEK:	DAY: Choose an item.		DATE: 20 April 2021
SUBJECT:	ENGLISH	LESSON: 29	TIME:
FORM/CLASS:	5		Choose an item.
DURATION:	60 minutes		Choose an item.
THEME:	Consumerism and Financial Awareness		RESOURCES:
TOPIC:	UNIT 4: SHOPPING THERAPY		Textbook
FOCUS SKILLS:	Reading 6		Student's Book, p44–45
LANGUAGE/GRAMMAR FOCUS:	Words/phrases related to shopping, features of non-fiction texts, advantages/disadvantages		Teacher's Book, p42
CONTENT STANDARD/S:	Main Skill: Reading 3.1 Understand a variety of text by using a range of appropriate reading strategies to construct meaning Complementary Skill: Speaking 2.1 Communicate information, ideas, opinions and feelings intelligibly on familiar topics		iTHINK MAPS: Tree CROSS CURRICULAR ELEMENTS: Financial Education
LEARNING STANDARD/S:	Main Skill: Reading 3.1.6 Recognise with little or no support typical features at word, sentence and text levels of a wide range of genres Complementary Skill: Speaking 2.1.2 Ask about and explain advantages and disadvantages of ideas plans arrangements		LEARNING DOMAIN: Analyse ASSESSMENT: Written Exercise
LEARNING OBJECTIVES:	Main Reading By the end of the lesson, pupils will be able to recognise the typical features of a magazine, an advertisement, FAQs and a personal email by listing the tone, punctuation, format and language used. Complementary Speaking By the end of the lesson, pupils will demonstrate the ability to discuss the advantages and disadvantages of at least two different ideas, plans, or arrangements, showing clear understanding and reasoning in their explanations, as evidenced by participating in a structured debate or discussion activity and receiving a satisfactory rating on a speaking rubric.		MORAL VALUES: Moderation – Not excessive in words and actions
SUCCESS CRITERIA :	Main Skill (Reading) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Correctly identify the genre of each text (magazine, advertisement, FAQs, personal email). Accurately describe the tone of each text. Identify key punctuation features typical of each genre. Describe the format specific to each genre. Point out and explain the language characteristic of each genre. Complementary Skill (Speaking) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Actively participate in a structured debate or discussion. Understand and clearly express at least two advantages and two disadvantages for each idea, plan, or arrangement. Use clear, coherent language appropriate to the topic. Provide logical explanations for the advantages and disadvantages mentioned. Achieve a satisfactory or higher rating on the speaking rubric. 		
ACTIVITIES : I. PRE LESSON	a. Pupils revise their knowledge of shopping vocabulary by playing a game. b. Pupils stand up and mingle until they find their partner i.e. word and correct definition c. Pupils share the answers with the class d. Pupils read the instructions of Activity 1 and explain what they have to do to check understanding e. Pupils read the words and ask anything they don't understand and discuss with a partner		FA/Differentiation Strategies FA: Starter (Matching)

II. LESSON DEVELOPMENT – GIST- TASK	f. Pupils repeat the words after teacher and correct their pronunciation where necessary g. Pupils work individually to mark their preferences h. Pupils check answers in pairs before discussing as a class i. Pupils read the instructions of Activity 2 and explain what they have to do to check understanding j. Pupils discuss the answers in pairs (The do peer assessment while speaking) k. Pupils list the advantages and disadvantages on the white board and discuss them as a class ()	Moral Value: Moderation – Not excessive in words and actions
III. DETAILED TASK	l. Pupils read the instructions of Activity 3 and explain what they have to do to check understanding m. Pupils skim the texts and look for answers by underlining the parts of the text that help them to answer the question n. Pupils do the task individually and then discuss the task check answers as a class i. Pupils state where each of the four texts come from and what typical features of the genre does each text illustrate ii. New-Tech Magazine. A magazine introducing and reviewing new (technological) gadgets on the market. Typical features include: personal, informal tone speaking directly to the reader, rhetorical questions, persuasive language, punctuation such as ellipses and exclamation marks used for emphasis, describing personal experience, a concluding paragraph summing up opinion. iii. No Lessons Needed! An advertisement. Typical features include: persuasive language, punctuation such as exclamation marks used for emphasis, facts/information ordered with bullet points so easy to read, subheadings to make information easier to read, use of phrases rather than full sentences to get across main points. iv. FAQs from the instruction manual/magazine/article about gTar, etc. Typical features include: formal, impersonal tone. A question first in italics and different colour from answer to stand out, question followed by an explanation. v. To: Jimmy Sage. A personal email found on a computer, laptop, iPad, phone. Typical features include: the subject of the email, informal friendly tone, contractions, talking directly to reader, name signed off.	FA: Think – Pair – Share FA: Think – Pair – Share I-THINK: Tree Map FA: No hands-up (Nominate)
IV. POST-LESSON	o. Pupils review the vocabulary introduced in the pre-lesson activity by playing true or false p. Teacher ask some questions for students to ponder and answer (HOTS) q. Pupils listen to the words /phrases and the definitions and decide whether the definition is right or wrong (Pupils can use traffic light cards or just raise their hand if they think the definition is correct) r. Teacher gives SPM reading practice worksheet as homework.	Differentiation: Support can be given to less proficient pupils depending on their needs, such as by providing a list of the typical features illustrated in the different types of articles in Activity 3 for them to find examples of FA: Plenary (True/False)
REFLECTION: Attendance: / Absent: / Truant: / School Activity: /	 Follow-up / Reinforcement: PdP could not be conducted and will be postponed due to:	

APPENDIX J

A SAMPLE OF TEACHING MATERIAL FROM MADAM JASMINE'S LESSON

4. Complete the table below with information obtained from the text on page 8 in your textbook.

	Opinion	Reason
Alicia, 16	Social networking sites useful for helping people	play knowledge going
Adrian, 16	Social networking sites is negative giving negative affect	sending viruses or spam
Rayyan, 15	using a social networking sites makes it a lot easier.	because got our own page to ad
Emma, 14	giving up in meeting social networking sites.	because her mother monitor Emma

5. From the text identify some of the advantages and disadvantages of using social networking sites. List them in the table below. Discuss your answers with a partner.

Advantages	Disadvantages
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> reconnect with friends with year past can help people through social networking sites useful for events easy to organise tickets facilitate altruistic endeavours helping in education 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> devote countless hours to virtual games. sending viruses and spam someone pretend to be yourself and commit crime. cyber bullying detracted from real-life experiences social interactions with a variety of acquaintances using the words below.

C. You have explored the words below, while reading the text. Construct sentences using the words below.

- drawback : One of the drawbacks of social networking sites is that everyone can see once they log into your account.
- nasty : Adam thinks cyberbullying is a nasty action.
- constantly : The notification on my Instagram page is constantly showing up.
- update : The social networking site like Facebook always updates their recent happenings.
- highlights : I will post my family events to highlight
- deactivating : I've been thinking about deactivating my Instagram account after receiving an account hacked message.

Your Opinion:
Social networking sites

A. Alicia, 16
I relish the opportunity to utilize social networking sites to maintain connections with my companions and rekindle friendships from years past. To my delight, I recently reconnected with a childhood confidant from primary school. Social networking platforms also facilitate altruistic endeavours; I observed on a friend's profile that someone was in dire need of a driving instructor. My uncle, a proficient instructor, happens to be on the same platform. Upon introducing them, they expressed their mutual gratitude. My parents often criticize my penchant for online gaming with peers, but I staunchly oppose their viewpoint. Engaging in trivia, word games, and chess captivates my intellect and provides an educational experience, nullifying any potential drawbacks.

C. Rayyan, 15
While I seldom indulge in social networking, I concede that its merits are occasionally apparent. The incessant compulsion to update one's status eludes me; I have little interest in the minutiae of others' lives. However, when coordinating events, such platforms prove invaluable. Currently, my school is organizing a play, and social networking has expedited our efforts in ticket sales and promotion. Our dedicated page facilitates publicity and, post-event, will serve as a repository for photographic and video highlights.

D. Emma, 14
Although I am an active participant on a social networking site, I am contemplating terminating my involvement. The platform has increasingly encroached upon my personal life, as I devote countless hours to virtual games and social interactions with a vast array of acquaintances. This digital preoccupation has detracted from my real-life experiences. To exacerbate matters, my mother, who has joined the same platform, constantly monitors my online activity. This invasion of privacy is utterly mortifying and may ultimately be the catalyst for my departure from the site.

B. Adrian, 16
I harbour reservations about the ubiquity of social networking sites. The prospect of divulging excessive personal information on the web is disconcerting, as it paves the way for unsolicited emails and malicious cyberbullying. Cyberbullying, a pervasive and insidious phenomenon, has driven a friend of mine to abandon a popular platform. Additionally, identity theft remains a pressing concern, as malevolent individuals could masquerade as me to perpetrate nefarious acts.

Task : Identify the unfamiliar words in the given text and consult your textbook to find their meanings.

APPENDIX K

THE CALCULATION OF INTER – RATER RELIABILITY

Experts evaluating the data indicated agreement and disagreement with the data presented to them. The number of agreements and disagreements were filled in a confusion matrix as shown below :

Table 3

Inter – Rater Reliability Matrix Confusion Table Sample

	Rater A Yes	Rater A No
Rater B Yes	<i>A</i>	<i>b</i>
Rater B No	<i>C</i>	<i>d</i>

Where :

a – number of times both raters agreed

b – the number of times where rater ‘A’ disagreed and rater ‘B’ agreed

c – the number of times where rater ‘A’ agreed and rater ‘B’ disagreed

d – the number of time where rater ‘A’ and rater ‘B’ disagreed

Based on the formula above the confusion matrix for this study is shown as below :

Table 4

Inter – Rater Reliability Matrix Confusion Table for the current study

	Rater A Yes	Rater A No
Rater B Yes	43	8
Rater B No	6	21

The data provided by the experts who evaluated the data collected Cohen's kappa is obtained through the following steps :

- a) Calculate the Observed Proportion of Agreement (P_o)

$$p = \frac{a + d}{a + b + c + d}$$

The values based on the formula is inserted as shown in the Figure below;

$$p = \frac{43 + 21}{43 + 8 + 6 + 21}$$

- b) The Expected Proportion of Agreement by chance (P_e) is obtained using the formula below :

$$P(\text{both Yes}) = \frac{(a + b) \times (a + c)}{n^2}$$

$$P(\text{both No}) = \frac{(c + d) \times (b + d)}{n^2}$$

Where n is the total number of observations ($a + b + c + d$)

The probabilities were then summed up :

$$p_e = p(\text{both Yes}) + p(\text{both no})$$

The values are inserted as shown below ;

$$p_e = \left[\frac{(43 + 8) \times (43 + 6)}{78^2} \right] + \left[\frac{(6 + 21) \times (8 + 21)}{78^2} \right]$$

c) The following would be the computation of Cohen's Kappa;

$$K = \frac{p_o - p_e}{1 - p_e}$$

Based on the computation formula above, the value of Cohen's Kappa can be calculated as below :

a)

$$K = \frac{0.821 - 0.539}{1 - 0.539}$$

$$K = 0.610$$

The observed proportion of agreement (p_o) is 0.821 which means that the two experts who validated the data had approximately agreed with 82.1% of the statements. Meanwhile the expected proportion of agreement by chance (p_e) is 0.539 which means that the two raters' agreement on the data is 53.9% is by chance.

The computed Cohen's Kappa in this study is 0.610 and this value falls in substantial range of agreement between two raters under the Cohen Kappa's rating of inter-rater reliability by Landis and Koch (1977), which means that there is a substantial agreement on the data between the two raters.

APPENDIX L

TABLE OF THEMATIC ANALYSIS : A SUMMARY OF THE FINDINGS IN CHAPTER 4

Teachers' Understanding of Curriculum Implementation in the Malaysian Secondary English Language Classroom				
Research Question	Deductive Code	Inductive Code		Theme
		Code	Subtheme	
1. To what extent do teachers understand implementation of the CEFR – aligned English language curriculum through the cascade training that they have attended?	Teachers' understanding of the curriculum in lesson planning	Assessing the learning standards, assessing the learning objectives, aligning learning standards with objectives, referring to SOW to set the objective of the lesson	Matching the objective with learning standards	Theme 1 : Aligning lesson objectives with the lessons prescribed in the curriculum
		Objective and assessment criteria are linked with one another, measurable objectives, objectives achievable within lesson duration, Objectives tailored to students' language proficiency	Clarity and specificity in objectives	
	Teachers' understanding of the curriculum in terms classroom practices	Communicative teaching, student-centred learning, exam-orientedness, task-based learning, differentiation instructions, teacher-centred, autonomous learning, project-based learning,	Use of methodological approaches	Theme 2 : Delivering content
		Creating own materials, textbook utilisations, incorporation of authentic materials, lack of resources, lack knowledge on creating resources, overuse of textbook	Use of teaching resources	

Research Question	Deductive Code	Inductive Code		Theme
		Code	Subtheme	
	Teachers' understanding of developing learner understanding in curriculum implementation	Encourage students reflections, Integration of critical thinking tasks, open – ended questions, peer – teaching, student-led activities	Promoting learner autonomy	Theme 3 : Creating learning experiences
		Relate to global issues, simulation practice, use language with real situation, use of real-world scenario	Real – world relevance	
	Teachers' understanding of assessing learners in curriculum implementation	Feedback, formative assessments, peer-assessment, use of assessment rubrics, performance-based assessment	Assessment techniques	Theme 4 : Evaluating learning
		Adjusting instructional strategies, assessment for future lesson plans, identify student performance, language focus	Reflecting on assessments	
	Influence of training in classroom practices	Comprehensive exploration of the curriculum, depth of teachers' understanding, elements understood in training, surface level explanation, vague explanation of classroom practices	Clarity and depth	Theme 5: Understanding curriculum through the cascade training
		Confidence in curriculum implementation, good outcome of the training, improved understanding of the curriculum, strengths in training, training take away	Training effectiveness	

Research Question	Deductive Code	Inductive Code		Theme
		Code	Subtheme	
2. To what extent have the cascade training helped teachers in the implementation of their lessons?	Teachers understanding of the training for classroom practices	Better classroom management, enhanced teaching strategies, improved lesson planning, increased confidence, increased motivation	Perceived benefits from cascade training	Theme 1: Efficacy of cascade training
		Lack of clarity in training, misalignment in lesson objectives, overwhelming information, resources insufficient, time constraint.	Post – training phase	
		Increased self-awareness, shift in teaching philosophy	Personal reflections	Theme 2: Teacher growth and development
		Peer support from fellow teachers, shared best practices	Professional development	
	Teacher-dominated classroom	Lecture-based instruction, limited student interaction	Teacher – authority and control	Theme 3: Teacher-centredness
		Drilling worksheets, limited questioning	Passive student learning	
	Examination based teaching	Limited exploration, repetitive exam/based practices, teaching to test	Curriculum narrowing	Theme 4: Exam-oriented practices
		Feedback based on scores, frequent testing, performance pressure,	Assessment dominance	
3. What are the suggestions to improve the cascade training to develop better teacher understanding of the CEFR-aligned English language curriculum for secondary schools?	Suggestion for better training	Lengthen training process, knowledgeable trainers, engaging trainings, training delivery improvement	Training content and delivery	Theme 1: Training improvement and suggestions
		Follow-up after training, mentorship, refreshers' course, self-initiated networking	Post-training support	

Research Question	Deductive Code	Inductive Code		Theme
		Code	Subtheme	
4. What are the recommendations for teachers to improve classroom practices to be in line with the CEFR-aligned English language curriculum for secondary schools?		Lack interactive elements in activities, Lack of language use for real world context, lack practical examples, lack variations in activities	Hands on training	Theme 2 : Enhancing training
		Differentiation, exam – oriented assessment, lack alignment with plan in SOW, lack feedback from teachers	Classroom assessment	
	More attention to local ideas	Emphasis local culture, pbl on local culture, relating local culture in activities	Culture based projects	Theme 1 : Cultural relevance and contextualization
		Foreign culture, local culture, textbook difficulty, textbook high level	Incorporating local textbooks	
	Improvement in current teaching practice	Access to online lesson, embrace technology in lessons, learner-centred online, meaningful lessons online,	Online activities in language learning	Theme 2 : Digital literacy and technology integration
		Develop Ed-tech knowledge, teach better with technology, technology for teaching skills,	Professional development in educational technology	