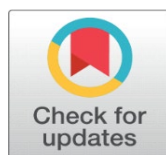
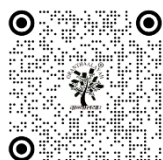


THE EFFECT OF THE CEFR ON ESL STUDENTS' INTEREST AND ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE IN THE ESL CLASSROOM

Evelyn Philip ¹, Mariann Edwina Mariadass ²

¹Language Centre, Universiti Pertahanan Nasional, Malaysia

²Language Centre, Universiti Pertahanan Nasional, Malaysia



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Corresponding Author

Mariann Edwina Mariadass,
edwina@upnm.edu.my

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ABSTRACT

This study looks at how English as a Second Language (ESL) learners' interest and academic achievement are affected by the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR). The study synthesises previous research and reports from ESL environments, including Malaysian educational settings, using a mixed-methods methodology. Results indicate that using the CEFR can boost student participation in the classroom and give teachers and students more precise benchmarks for proficiency. However, obstacles like task design, teacher readiness, and psychological elements (like fear) might moderate the overall effect. There includes discussion of the implications for language evaluation and instructional strategies.

Keywords: CEFR, ESL Students, Academic Performance, Learner Interest, Language Assessment

1. INTRODUCTION

A widely accepted standard for characterising language skill across six proficiency levels (A1–C2) is the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages: Learning, Teaching, Assessment (CEFR). The "can-do" descriptors of the CEFR, which were first created by the Council of Europe, provide clear standards for communicative competency in speaking, listening, reading, and writing. Despite being created in a European setting, CEFR is being more widely used in ESL educational reforms worldwide, particularly in Malaysia, to support curriculum, assessment, and instructional alignment.

This article aims to investigate the effects of CEFR implementation on the academic performance and interest in English of ESL learners in classroom settings.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. CEFR AND ESL TEACHING CONTEXTS

A standard language for characterising learner proficiency and creating curricula and tests is provided by the CEFR framework. The CEFR has been included into English language instruction in Malaysia in order to facilitate student development monitoring across language skills and to align standards with international benchmarks. Teachers can organise lessons and rigorously evaluate students' progress with the aid of CEFR descriptors.

2.2. STUDENT INTEREST AND ENGAGEMENT

According to research conducted in the Emirates, CEFR modifications, like matching assignments to suitable levels, can improve student motivation and engagement by matching instruction to learners' skills and lowering cognitive overload. When language tasks were both attainable and difficult, students expressed greater motivation and enjoyment, indicating a positive correlation between learner interest and well-aligned CEFR materials.

2.3. ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE

According to teachers' opinions of CEFR alignment, having specific proficiency targets aids in the planning of focused instruction, which may improve academic achievement. According to studies, teachers can help students develop their reading, writing, speaking, and listening skills by using CEFR benchmarks consistently when creating projects and evaluations.

2.4. CHALLENGES IN IMPLEMENTATION

Despite the possible advantages, research shows that teacher resources and training are necessary for the CEFR to be used effectively. Teachers that don't fully grasp the CEFR may use inconsistent teaching methods, which could have an impact on student involvement and outcomes.

2.5. PSYCHOLOGICAL FACTORS: ANXIETY AND MOTIVATION

Research also shows how student attitudes can be influenced by evaluation frameworks. For example, the effect of CEFR-aligned writing assignments on writing anxiety has been studied. Writing anxiety is an emotive factor that might have a negative impact on performance if it is not handled pedagogically.

3. METHODOLOGY

This study combines quantitative and qualitative results from educational reports, policy documents, and peer-reviewed research in a mixed-methods literature synthesis. Under CEFR-related ESL training, the emphasis is on scientifically supported insights into student involvement and academic outcomes. Learner interest and academic performance data were extracted and subjected to a theme analysis.

4. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

4.1. ENHANCING STUDENT INTEREST

Clear learning trajectories and attainable task design are made possible by CEFR. Interest and classroom engagement seem to rise when students identify quantifiable progress (e.g., going from A1 to A2 activities), indicating that the framework's organised progression promotes intrinsic motivation. Oganyan and Martynenko (2026)

4.2. ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE IMPROVEMENTS

According to educators, CEFR-aligned instructional frameworks facilitate the identification of learning gaps and the planning of suitable remedial activities. By making goals and expectations clear, this alignment seems to promote student achievement.

4.3. MEDIATING FACTORS: TEACHER PREPAREDNESS AND MATERIALS

Although CEFR has theoretical benefits, there are challenges in putting it into practice. In order to properly interpret descriptors and create activities that sustain students' attention while fostering skill development, teachers frequently need further training.

4.4. PSYCHOLOGICAL CONSIDERATIONS

The necessity for pedagogical practices that lower stress and boost student confidence is highlighted by the anxiety associated with CEFR assessment activities, particularly in writing.

5. CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

The CEFR's systematic approach to competency description and assessment has a big impact on how ESL classrooms are shaped. When implementation is backed by sufficient teacher training and resources, it generally has a beneficial impact on students' interest and academic performance. However, careful consideration of affective aspects, curricular design, and alignment with local education contexts are necessary for the efficient application of CEFR.

5.1. RECOMMENDATIONS FOR EDUCATORS

Professional development: Enhance teachers' comprehension of CEFR descriptors and assessment design through professional development.

Learner-centred tasks: To maintain interest, match activities to learner proficiency.

Support systems: Use supportive teaching techniques to address affective obstacles like writing anxiety.

CONFLICT OF INTERESTS

None.

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