Research Article:

# Secondary School English Teachers' Knowledge and Practice on CEFR-Aligned English Curriculum

**Ng Hui Yin[1] and Mohamad Zohir Ahmad[2]***

[1]Sekolah Menengah Jenis Kebangsaan (SMJK) Phor Tay, 731 Jalan Sungai Dua, George Town, 11700 Pulau Pinang, Malaysia
[2]School of Educational Studies, Universiti Sains Malaysia, 11800 USM Pulau Pinang, Malaysia

*Corresponding author: zohir@usm.my

## ABSTRACT

The Ministry of Education aligned the national English curriculum with the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) to increase the quality and standard of English Language. The success in implementing this educational reform is highly dependent on teachers. Teachers need to have sufficient knowledge in the incorporation of CEFR in their teaching to develop the ability of students to meet targeted CFER levels of English proficiency. The purpose of this study is to identify the teachers' level of knowledge and practice on CEFR-aligned English curriculum. A total of 148 teachers who teach Form 1 and Form 2 English from the secondary schools in Pulau Pinang were involved in this study. The instrument of this study was a closed-ended questionnaire adapted from Kır (2011) and Ngo (2017). The data were analysed using descriptive and inferential statistics. Inferential analysis was conducted using Pearson correlation and Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) test. The findings showed that the level of knowledge ($M$ = 3.49, $SD$ = 0.58) and practice of teachers ($M$ = 3.50, $SD$ = 0.55) on CEFR-aligned English curriculum were moderate. Also, there was a strong relationship between teachers' knowledge and practice on CEFR-aligned English curriculum. There was a significant difference existed in the level of knowledge and practice on CEFR-aligned English curriculum based on demographic factor namely the type of training received by teachers on CEFR. The findings of this study implied that the training and workshops ought to be conducted frequently as a support for teachers towards the implementation.

**Keywords:** CEFR, teacher's knowledge, teacher's practice, teacher's training

## INTRODUCTION

In the current era of globalisation, learning English language is a necessity. Proficiency in English means that there is more competitive advantage in today's era of globalisation. In response to this new development, the government has correctly emphasised on the learning of English to facilitate the acquiring of new knowledge and skills so that a knowledge-based economy would be in place (Thirusanku & Yunus, 2014). However, employers have expressed their dissatisfaction with the graduates they hired especially on their low command of English (Ministry of Education Malaysia, 2015a, p. 7).

Teachers are instrumental in improving English proficiency among students. Teachers need to be proficient in the English language to facilitate the teaching and learning process, besides helping students acquire high levels of English proficiency. However, there is low English language proficiency among English language teachers. According to the Malaysian Education Blueprint (MEB) 2013–2015 report, the incidence of having English language teachers with low English language proficiency has resulted in the low achievement of students in the English language. There is a significant number of English language teachers who were assessed with the Cambridge Placement Test (CPT) and did not meet the minimum proficiency standard required for teaching English language. In 2012, almost 65% of the 24,075 English language option teachers failed to reach the minimum target (Ministry of Education Malaysia, 2014).

As a consequence, the Ministry of Education has aligned the national English curriculum with the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) to increase the quality and standard of English Language (Ministry of Education Malaysia, 2015b, p. 7). It is an ongoing effort by the government to enhance the proficiency level of English to be globally competitive. The shift in the English Language curriculum towards the CEFR is a major reform in Malaysia. It is a part of the implementation of the Malaysia Education Blueprint 2013–2025 to produce students with 'operational proficiency' in English language, which is being implemented to achieve the aspirations in Shift 2 of Malaysia Education Blueprint to ensure every child is proficient in Bahasa Malaysia and English language (Ministry of Education Malaysia, 2013). Besides, it aims to enhance the English proficiency level of students to be in line with the international benchmark (Ministry of Education Malaysia, 2015b, p. 7).

Adopting the CEFR as an international benchmark will keep the Malaysia curriculum abreast with the language teaching and learning in the world. Besides, it can serve as a guide for foreign employers and universities in the candidate selection process (Fennely, 2016). It will be easier for them to select the most suitable candidates based on the common international standards (Ministry of Education Malaysia, 2015b, p. 13). In view of the fact that CEFR is good for Malaysians, the present English curriculum needs to be revised and modified to align with the international standard. Teaching and learning materials as well as assessments need to be matched with the CEFR benchmark to carry out the implementation successfully.

According to Ornstein and Hunkins (2018), the curriculum reform was unsuccessful in its implementation due to insufficient information, knowledge and skills of teachers in order to implement changes effectively. Clearly, the success of a curriculum reform depends on the ability of the teachers, The lack of knowledge among teachers will slow down the success of curriculum implementation delivery.

Mat Nor et al. (2017) discovered that teachers' knowledge will affect the teaching of lessons, thus hindering the progress of the implementation of curriculum reform. This is consistent with the findings of Hafizan and Ahmad (2017) stating that insufficient knowledge of teachers will lead to the ineffective delivery of lesson. Hence, it is extremely crucial that teachers need to be competent in English to increase the quality of their lesson.

There are many challenges encountered during the implementation of CEFR (Nurul Farehah & Mohd Sallehhudin, 2018). Sidhu et al. (2018) found that teachers have limited understanding on the current curriculum. They do not adopt the new teaching approach, but using the traditional teacher-centred approach in classroom, which is inconsistent with the action-oriented approach in the CEFR. In Japan, as reported by Floris (2013), only a few people paid attention on CEFR while the majority tend to ignore it. They have inadequate knowledge and exposure to CEFR. In addition, the teachers are not equipped with the knowledge to adapt the CEFR properly (Fennely, 2016).

Although there have been many trainings and workshops conducted for teachers, they still do not have sufficient knowledge to incorporate CEFR in their teaching to develop the ability of students to meet the "Can-Do" level. As a result, teachers need to be knowledgeable in terms of content and pedagogical skills, good at utilising learning materials besides having a positive attitude (Hasnah & Jamaludin, 2017; Kırkgoz, 2008).

Based on the issues stated above, knowledge and practice of teachers are the key factors to the success implementation of curriculum reform. Since the CEFR-aligned curriculum had been just implemented in 2018, only a few studies have been conducted on this curriculum innovation. Therefore, it is crucial to review this reform to improve the English proficiency level of students.

**Objectives**

This study aims to determine the secondary school teachers' level of knowledge and practice on CEFR-aligned English curriculum. Besides, it examines the difference in teachers' level of knowledge and practice on CEFR-aligned English curriculum according to the types of training. Moreover, the relationship between knowledge and practice on the curriculum implementation is identified in this study.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### Teachers' Knowledge and Practice

A teacher is one of the prominent factors in ensuring the success of the implementation of curriculum reforms (Rahman & Haslynda, 2014; Razali et al., 2017). They need to be equipped with necessary knowledge and skills to deliver an excellent learning process for students. Most of the time, teachers who are more knowledgeable are assumed to teach better. Meanwhile, the non-option teachers may face problems while teaching since they have many weaknesses in terms of pedagogical knowledge as they are not trained to teach the subject but are being asked to teach (Nurul Hudaa et al., 2010). Thus, they need to spend more time to explore and learn about the subject to deliver a good lesson. If teachers do not have sufficient knowledge, they will have lack of confidence while delivering lesson (Ernest, 1989; Cuban, 1993). This would consequently affect the understanding of students (Ali et al., 2014) resulting in the students not paying much attention and showing no interest in the learning process (Mohamed & Ahmad, 2010).

According to Jerome and Stephens Gunams Samuel (2017), teachers' practice is one of the key components of education that provides important insights in the improvement of the process of curriculum reforms. If teachers are unable to conduct practice effectively, even the best curriculum would not benefit students in their future. When teachers fail to understand their students' capability levels, teachers will not be able to carry out good practices and intervention in classroom. It would also affect the teachers' decisions in adopting the practice of CEFR-aligned English curriculum in the classroom. Liu et al. (2010) claimed that knowledge of the subject is strongly related with the instructional practice of teachers. They further explained that the selection of teaching approaches in classroom is largely influenced by the teachers' knowledge, since they would not carry out any instructional practice that they do not understand.

### Teachers' Training

Professional development or training is one of the elements that can be utilised in ensuring a successful curriculum reform. According to Mizell (2010), training serves as a support for teachers during the implementation of the curriculum. If teachers encounter problems or unfamiliar issues regarding the new curriculum, the training would provide them some additional insights and solutions to solve the problems. Teachers would be able to learn through training and then practise effectively in the classroom. Teachers' competency could be optimised in terms of knowledge and skills. Therefore, a training program has to be designed carefully to achieve the desired objectives (Hiew & Murray, 2018). Moreover, the content of a program needs to be relevant to the needs of teachers. Mwangi and Mugambi (2013) noted that teachers will not be interested in the program as the content did not reflect their professional needs regarding the new curriculum. They felt like they are wasting their time to attend a program without relevant content. Thus, the content of program has to address the real issues faced by the teachers in the classroom to fulfil the needs of teachers.

Faez et al. (2011) pointed out that inadequate professional development is the reason that brought failure into the implementation of the curriculum. As mentioned by Reyneke et al. (2010) as well as Nurul Farehah and Mohd Sallehhudin (2018), the lack of training might lead to situations where there are teachers having limited knowledge. Teachers will become confused, and in turn not being able to implement the curriculum. Thus, the duration and content of training need to be considered thoughtfully, so that teachers can gain more knowledge and have a better understanding of the implementation of the curriculum. Continuous training for teachers ought to be organised by Ministry of Education to assist teachers to keep on learning.

**Previous Studies on the Implementation of CEFR**

There are some studies that investigated the implementation of CEFR in other countries. Turnbull (2011) reported that teachers did not have adequate preparation and sufficient time to accept the sudden implementation of CEFR in Canada. The immediate use of CEFR takes a long time for the teachers to gradually accept and which could not be done in a short period of time. Jimbo (2011) found the lack of understanding among teachers regarding the knowledge of the terms in CEFR. Most of the teachers were only familiar with the "Can-Do" list, but were unfamiliar with other components of CEFR, including action-approach of language teaching. The results suggested that teachers need to be exposed to the philosophy or principle of CEFR other than the "Can-Do" list and six levels of competences.

In another study, Ngo (2017) conducted a study aiming to investigate the perceptions and use of the CEFR of Vietnamese teachers on their related needs, based on the diffusion of innovation model. The results revealed that most of the respondents have positive attitude towards the CEFR, especially its role in curriculum development. The researcher further stated that those who have more teaching experience would utilise the framework better in terms of assessment and pedagogy. However, some of the respondents voiced out that they did not fully adopted the CEFR, but just complied it with IELTS and TOEFL materials to prepare students for the university exit test. Besides, the study also reported that teachers need more training related to the CEFR. Thus, training and workshop should be carried out more frequently to strengthen the knowledge and practice of teachers regarding the implementation.

However, there are very few studies regarding the implementation of CEFR in Malaysia. Lo (2018) found that the teachers have a high level of familiarisation towards the innovation. In addition, the result showed no significant difference among English teachers towards the implementation of CEFR innovation in terms of teaching experience except for Stage 4: Consequence. This means that teachers with less teaching experience are more concerned towards the consequences of this curriculum innovation in their students' understanding and performance compared to other groups of teachers.

In a study set out to determine teachers' knowledge and perceptions towards the CEFR-aligned school-based assessment SBA, Sidhu et al. (2018) found that teachers have limited understanding on the current curriculum and were unable to adopt the new teaching approach. The study revealed that teachers encountered challenges during the implementation. They reported that time constraints, heavy workload and inadequate training were the challenges that impeded the implementation of the curriculum. They also emphasised training as one of the important elements for effective curriculum to take place. Thus, they reached the conclusion that training would definitely increase the competency and instructional classroom practice of teachers during the implementation.

Nurul Farehah and Mohd Sallehhudin (2018) discussed on teachers' awareness and the challenges faced during the implementation of CEFR in Malaysia. The results revealed that most of the respondents have generally accepted CEFR with positive attitude. However, there are a lot of challenges encountered during the implementation. For instance, the lack of training, low English proficiency of teachers and resistance of teachers were seen to consequently cause the failure of the implementation. As a result, more time and preparation should be given to all teachers to be familiar with the CEFR framework before aligning it in classroom.

To summerise, previous studies have mostly focused on issues and challenges in CEFR implementation. However, there is still a need for discussion on secondary school teachers' role towards the implementation of CEFR-aligned English curriculum. To fill this literature gap, this present study was conducted to identify the secondary school teachers' knowledge and practice on CEFR-aligned English curriculum.

## METHODOLOGY

This study basically was a survey that focused on the secondary school English teachers who have implemented the CEFR-aligned English curriculum in Pulau Pinang. The total population for this study consisted of 240 teachers who teach Form 1 and Form 2 English from the secondary schools in Pulau Pinang. According to Krejcie and Morgan (1970), the number of sample size required was 148 from the population of 240 respondents. Therefore, 148 teachers were included as participants in this study.

The sampling method used was the simple random sampling. It was a type of sampling method in which the individuals from the defined population had the same and equal chance of being selected (Creswell, 2012). This technique was able to generalise the sample to a population effectively as the researcher chose the sample randomly. In this study, the researcher obtained a list of all participants from the Penang Education Department. Then, the researcher generated random numbers and selected one person per random number for the sample.

The instrument used in this study was questionnaire. Meanwhile, the items were adapted from the previous study which was relevant to this study. A questionnaire developed by Kır (2011) was adapted to investigate the level of knowledge of English language teachers towards the CEFR-aligned curriculum. Besides, the researcher also adapted the questionnaire from Ngo (2017) to determine the practice of English language teachers regarding the CEFR-aligned curriculum.

The questionnaire consisted of three parts namely Part A, Part B and Part C. Part A comprised four items, which were concerned with the demographic data of participants including gender, academic qualifications, number of years of teaching experience and types of training received on the English Language CEFR-aligned curriculum. Part B consisted of 20 closed-ended questions that focused on the knowledge about CEFR (item 1–4), knowledge about content of the CEFR-aligned English Curriculum and pedagogical knowledge of the teachers (item 5-20). Part C consisted of 22 closed-ended items, which involved the practice of teachers on CEFR-aligned English Curriculum. Five-point Likert scale was used in Part B and Part C ranging from '1 = strongly disagree', '2 = disagree', '3 = slightly agree', '4 = agree' to '5 = strongly agree'. The participants needed to complete the scale by marking the appropriate response.

A pilot study was conducted in the secondary schools in Penang. Forty teachers who teach Form 1 and Form 2 English had answered the questionnaire. The Alpha value for Part B (Teachers' Knowledge) was 0.957 while the Alpha value for Part C (Teachers' Practice) was .928. Since the Alpha value was more than 0.90, it indicates that this instrument was consistent and could be used in this study (Cohen et al., 2011).

The data were processed and analysed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) Version 24.0 (IBM Corp., 2016). There were two types analysis used for closed-ended data in this study, which were descriptive statistics and inferential statistics. Frequency, percentage and mean were used to obtain descriptive statistics. The mean value could be classified into three groups, which were high (3.68–5.00), moderate (2.34–3.67) and low (1.00–2.33) (Nor Atikah, 2018). Inferential statistics was used to test the hypotheses. Meanwhile, Pearson Correlation test and One-way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) test were used as the methods of analysis. Pearson Correlation test was used to determine the relationship between teachers' level of knowledge and level of practice on CEFR-aligned English curriculum. One-way ANOVA was used to identify the differences in terms of the types of training received by the participants in this study. Besides, Post-Hoc Tukey Comparison was used to test the differences of the teachers' level of knowledge and level of practice among the different types of training.

## FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

### Demographic Information

A total of 148 questionnaires were collected. The respondents' profile included gender, academic qualifications, number of years of English language teaching experience and training receive on CEFR-aligned curriculum education level. The demographic data of the respondents are as shown in Table 1.

Out of the total survey respondents, 113 of them (76.4%) were female teachers while 35 of them (23.6%) were male teachers. A majority of the respondents were Bachelor's degree holders representing 132 respondents (89.2%) participating in this study. This was followed by Master's degree respondents with 15 respondents (10.1%). The least number of the respondents who took part in this study was one PhD holder (9.7%). In terms of training, 76 respondents (51.4%) were reported to have participated in local trainer workshops from teachers who attended the cascade workshop. This was followed by 33 respondents (22.3%) who had taken part in the cascade workshop and 22 respondents (14.9%) who had never taken part in any workshop. Reported participation in Master Trainer workshop and local trainer workshop from someone else were marked lower among the respondents (4.7% and 6.8%, respectively).

**Table 1.** Demographic characteristics of respondents

| Demographic variable | $N$ | Percentage |
|---|---|---|
| Gender | 35 | 23.6 |
|     Male | 113 | 76.4 |
|     Female | | |
| Academic qualifications | | |
|     Bachelor's degree | 132 | 89.2 |
|     Master's degree | 15 | 10.1 |
|     Doctorate degree | 1 | 9.7 |
| Number of years of English language teaching experience | | |
|     Less than 5 years | 60 | 40.5 |
|     5–9 years | 34 | 23.0 |
|     10–14 years | 16 | 10.8 |
|     More than 15 years | 38 | 25.7 |
| Training received on CEFR-aligned curriculum | | |
|     Master Trainer workshop | 7 | 4.7 |
|     Cascade workshop | 33 | 22.3 |
|     Local trainer workshop from teacher who attended cascade workshop | 76 | 51.4 |
|     Local trainer workshop from someone else | 10 | 6.8 |
|     None | 22 | 14.9 |

**Teachers' Level of Knowledge and Practice on CEFR-aligned English Curriculum**

The teachers' knowledge and practice on CEFR-aligned English curriculum were in moderate level.

**Table 2.** Descriptive analysis of teachers' level of knowledge and practice

| Variable | Mean |
| --- | --- |
| Teachers' level of knowledge | 3.49 |
| Teachers' level of practice | 3.50 |

Data obtained from closed-ended items showed that teachers have moderate knowledge of the CEFR-aligned curriculum. This revealed that the teachers had insufficient knowledge on CEFR-aligned English curriculum. This result is in line with that obtained by Jimbo (2011), Sidhu et al. (2018) as well as Fennely (2016) indicating that teachers lack the understanding of CEFR and they were not ready to adapt to the new curriculum.

Besides, this study revealed that teachers rarely practised the CEFR-aligned curriculum. The teachers' level of practice on the CEFR-aligned English curriculum showed that they may have not put much effort to expose their students to the CEFR-aligned curriculum. This finding was supported by Nguyen and Hamid (2015) who stated that only a small number of teachers were motivated enough to use CEFR "Can-Do" statements in their classroom activities. This was due to the low awareness of the teachers on CEFR making them unprepared to practise it. Vallax (2011) discovered that majority of the teachers in France, UK, Taiwan, Hong Kong, New Zealand and Australia admitted that they did not understand the framework although it had been implemented for years. However, this finding is contrary to the study of Azli and Akmar (2019), which discovered that teachers did carry out activities that are aligned with the current CEFR curriculum in the classroom such as group discussions, mind mapping, oral quizzes, role plays and language games. Therefore, as highlighted by Turnbull (2011), teachers need extra amount of time to understand and become familiar with the CEFR-related tools. Ernest (1989) and Cuban (1993) stated that teachers need to spend time to explore the subject to deliver a good lesson. They would have experienced lack of confidence while delivering lesson if they do not have sufficient knowledge.

**Teachers' Level of Knowledge and Training**

One-way ANOVA test was conducted to explore the impact of training on teachers' level of knowledge on CEFR-aligned English curriculum. Subjects were divided into five groups according to the types of training they received (Master Trainer workshop; cascade workshop; local trainer workshop from teacher who attended cascade workshop; local trainer workshop from someone else; none). The result of the test is presented in Table 3.

**Table 3.** ANOVA test for different training workshops in teachers' level of knowledge

| Knowledge | Sum of squares | df | Mean square | F | Sig. |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Between groups | 10.749 | 4 | 2.687 | 9.877 | 0.000 |
| Within groups | 38.903 | 143 | 0.272 | | |
| Total | 49.652 | 147 | | | |

There was a statistically significant difference in the teachers' level of knowledge on CEFR-aligned English curriculum according the types of training [$F(4,143) = 9.88$, $p = 0.00$]. The effect size calculated using eta squared was 0.22, which was a large effect. Since there was a significant difference in the group means, post-hoc comparisons using the Tukey HSD test was done to find the differences between the groups.

Post-hoc comparisons using the Tukey HSD test indicated that the mean score for those who had not received any training ($M = 2.87$, $SD = 0.48$) was significantly different from those who received training from Master Trainer workshop ($M = 3.71$, $SD = 0.44$); cascade workshop ($M = 3.72$, $SD = 0.37$); local trainer workshop from teachers who attended cascade workshop ($M = 3.54$, $SD = 0.60$) and local trainer workshop from teachers who attended cascade workshop ($M = 3.56$, $SD = 0.43$) since the $p < 0.05$. It can be seen that teachers who had not received any training on CEFR have significantly lower scores than others. Therefore, training plays important role in providing support for teachers during the implementation of the curriculum (Mizell, 2010). Shihiba (2011) stated that one of the reasons that caused the lack of knowledge or practice of teachers on new curriculum was insufficient training. The training would provide teachers with useful knowledge regarding the curriculum. Training needs to be conducted as a part of preparation for the new curriculum implementation in order to achieve good outcomes. Another reason might be that this newly implemented curriculum was still not thoroughly exposed to all teachers. In the context of this study, the school teachers participated in the CEFR training or professional development just a few months before the curriculum started to be used in school. Teachers were unclear and could not practise what they did not understand in classroom. As the implementation was done in a hurried manner, teachers were allocated a very short time to prepare. This eventually caused the implementation of CEFR-aligned curriculum to be failed as intended in the Malaysia Education Blueprint.

**Teachers' Level of Practice and Training**

One-way ANOVA test was conducted to explore the impact of training on teachers' level of practice on CEFR-aligned English curriculum. Subjects were divided into five groups according to the types of training they received (Master Trainer workshop; cascade workshop; local trainer workshop from teachers who attended cascade workshop; local trainer workshop from someone else; none). The result obtained from the analysis is shown in Table 4.

**Table 4.** ANOVA tests for different training workshops in teachers' level of practice

| Knowledge | Sum of squares | *df* | Mean square | F | Sig. |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Between groups | 10.749 | 4 | 2.687 | 9.877 | 0.000 |
| Within groups | 38.903 | 143 | 0.272 | | |
| Total | 49.652 | 147 | | | |

There was a statistically significant difference in the teachers' level of practice on CEFR-aligned English curriculum based on the types of training [F(4,143) = 2.80, $p$ = 0.03]. The effect size calculated using eta squared was 0.07, which was a medium effect. Since there was a significant difference in the group means, post-hoc comparison using the Tukey HSD test was done to find the differences between the groups.

Post-hoc comparison using the Tukey HSD test indicated that the mean score for those who had not received any training (*M* = 3.17, *SD* = 0.45) was significantly different from the groups of teachers who received training from the cascade workshop (*M* = 3.63, *SD* = 0.46) since $p$ = 0.02, which was less than 0.05. Whereas the groups of teachers who did not receive any training did not differ significantly from either the groups of teachers who received training from Master Trainer workshop; local trainer workshop from teacher who attended cascade workshop or local trainer workshop from someone else.

In terms of training, 85.1% of teachers had attended trainings including Master Trainer workshop, cascade workshop, local trainer workshop from teachers who attended cascade workshop and local trainer workshop from someone else. However, the teachers' knowledge and practice on CEFR-aligned English curriculum were at moderate level.

In line with the discussion regarding the level of knowledge and practice of the teachers with the training that they went through, a possible explanation for this might be that the training that were conducted for teachers did not achieve the intended outcomes. The factors included short time period of training, incompetent facilitators and insufficient learning opportunities (Reyneke et al., 2010). According to the English Language Standards and Quality Council (ELSQC), every school is supposed to have 18 hours of in-house training regarding the new curriculum. However, most of the schools reduced the training hours to 6 hours only (Nurul Farehah & Mohd Sallehhudin, 2018). The training provided for the teachers was inadequate to enhance their understanding on the new curriculum. Besides, Reyneke et al. (2010) claimed that practical demonstration of the teaching was less carried out during the short time period of in-house training. It was often done in a way of presenting the written documents and PowerPoint slides (Piccardo, 2011).

In fact, adopting the cascading method to conduct training might not be that effective as reported. Moreover, a lot of complaints have been made by teachers regarding their incompetent district trainers who did not even understand the curriculum well (Ono & Ferreira, 2010). Sometimes, the important information would be misinterpreted, as those who attended the training were not experts. They were just merely attending the training

without giving their full attention (Aziz et al., 2018; Nurul Farehah & Mohd Sallehhudin, 2018). These would lead teachers to be trained by trainers to an uncertain state and even caused misinterpretation.

Besides, the findings from this study showed that teachers who joined the Cascade workshop scored the highest (M = 3.71) among all groups of training for level of knowledge. The teachers who received training on CEFR either Master Trainer workshop; cascade workshop; local trainer workshop from teachers who attended cascade workshop or local trainer workshop from someone else had a higher level of knowledge compared to teachers who did not receive any training on CEFR (M = 2.87). This finding is consistent with the study of Yakışık and Gürocak (2018) in showing that the teachers who had participated in the training and workshop before, obviously would know better about the CEFR-aligned curriculum. This also supports Reyneke et al. (2010) as well as Nurul Farehah and Mohd Sallehhudin (2018) studies which stated that teachers will have limited knowledge and become confused if they receive limited training and in turn not being able to implement the curriculum.

Furthermore, the findings indicated that the group of teachers who did not join any training on CEFR-aligned curriculum was significantly different from the group who joined cascade workshop for level of practice. Those who did not join any training faced some difficulties in delivering the new curriculum in classroom. Ngo (2017) as well as Nurul Farehah and Mohd Sallehhudin (2018) highlighted the importance of training and workshops in CEFR-aligned curriculum as it provides valuable knowledge for teachers in teaching. It serves as scaffolding for teachers in practicing the curriculum in classroom. A lot of information and teaching pedagogy about the curriculum could be gained through such trainings. Those who do not have training only knew a little bit or even none on the CEFR-aligned curriculum. They were not inclined to update and tended to ignore the new curriculum. Therefore, it was no surprise that the results showed that those who received training on CEFR had more knowledge compared to those who did not receive any training on CEFR. Through proper training, teachers were able to improve their learning and transform knowledge into practice. Therefore, they ought to be trained adequately to implement the curriculum content effectively.

**Teachers' Level of Knowledge and Practice on CEFR-aligned English Curriculum**

A Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient was computed to assess the relationship between teachers' level of knowledge and practice on CEFR-aligned English curriculum. The result of the correlational test is shown in Table 5.

There was a positive correlation between the two variables where $r = 0.709$, $n = 148$, $p = 0.00$. Overall, there was a statistically significant and moderate positive correlation between teachers' level of knowledge and practice on CEFR-aligned English curriculum where $r(146) = 0.709$, $p < 0.01$, $r^2 = 0.503$. About 50.3% of the variance in the teachers' level of knowledge was associated with the variance in the with teachers' level of practice on CEFR-aligned English curriculum.

**Table 5.** Correlation test between teachers' level of knowledge and practice

|  |  | Knowledge | Practice |
|---|---|---|---|
| Knowledge | Pearson correlation | 1 | 0.709** |
|  | Sig. (2-tailed) |  | 0.000 |
|  | *N* | 148 | 148 |
| Practice | Pearson correlation | 0.709** | 1 |
|  | Sig. (2-tailed) | 0.000 |  |
|  | *N* | 148 | 148 |

*Note*: ** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

From the findings, there was a significant correlation between teachers' level of knowledge and practice on CEFR-aligned English curriculum. This indicates that teachers with more knowledge would practise more in classroom. While practicing, teachers could gain knowledge from it. The significant relationship between teachers' knowledge and practice is in line with that of previous findings.

As mentioned in the literature review, teachers need to possess high level of knowledge to implement the curriculum. Nurul Farehah and Mohd Sallehhudin (2018) found that teachers refused to accept and practise CEFR-aligned curriculum due to their limited understanding and minimum exposure to CEFR. Franz and Teo (2017) also found that 94% of the English teachers in Thailand failed to reach the targeted proficiency level of B2. For them, having a proficiency level of A2 seems normal. Most of them were unconcerned and tended to ignore the curriculum reform-CEFR. This had eventually led to the failure of the curriculum reforms. Similarly, these results also reflected those of studies conducted by Caroline and Abdul Said (2014), Faez et al. (2011) and Liu et al. (2010) who found that teachers were unlikely to practise the new curriculum when they had inadequate knowledge about it. According to Anuar and Nelson (2015), a competent teacher ought to have a high level of knowledge as it could help the teacher to choose suitable teaching approaches and activities to conduct in the classroom. At the same time, teachers may also enrich their knowledge from their daily instructional practice (Hosseinifar, 2017). This clearly shows that the knowledge of teachers is closely related to the ability of the teachers to practise CEFR-aligned curriculum.

## CONCLUSION

The findings in this study indicated that teachers have a moderate level in knowledge and moderate level in practice on CEFR-aligned English curriculum. Additionally, there was a significant difference in the knowledge and practice on CEFR-aligned English curriculum based on the types of training received by the teachers. There was a strong relationship between teachers' knowledge and practice on CEFR-aligned English curriculum. Curriculum reform is a difficult task for teachers to execute. Teachers ought to have sufficient knowledge to improve their instructional practice in ensuring effective

implementation of the teaching and learning process. Thus, it is essential for English teachers to enrich their knowledge and get ready with certain skills before implementing CEFR-aligned English curriculum in classroom. Teachers also need to conduct practice effectively to benefit students in their future. Since the CEFR-aligned English curriculum was implemented in Malaysia in 2018, it is still too early to conclude whether or not the implementation is successful. Professional development and training must be sufficiently provided for the teachers by the Ministry of Education as an adequate support to the implementation. State Education Department needs to monitor the implementation and provide assistance for teachers if they face any problems during teaching and learning process. Experts including School Improvement Specialist Coach (SISC+) need to be there to guide teachers in planning and adopting suitable teaching techniques in classroom. Consequently, English teachers should be equipped with sufficient knowledge and conduct effective practice in classroom for a successful implementation. It will help to enhance the English proficiency level of students, thus achieving the expected curriculum goal set by the Ministry of Education.

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