TEACHERS' PERCEPTIONS TOWARD THE IMPLEMENTATION OF CEFR-ALIGNED TEXTBOOK IN SECONDARY SCHOOL

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DEDICATION

This report is dedicated to Abah, who had not lived long enough to share my success. It is also dedicated to Mak, my brothers and sisters and my special friend who supported me when I'm at my lowest, whose love and care I shall cherish forever.

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ABSTRACT

Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR) has been introduced into our education over the past years and curriculum reformation has occurred following to this situation. The teachers now have to use a new textbook to replace the previous textbook in teaching English in ELT classroom. Teachers need adapt themselves with this new curriculum reformation and their perceptions toward this implementation must be taken into consideration as they are the medium between the textbook with the students. This study mainly seeks to investigate the teachers' perceptions toward the implementation of CEFR-aligned textbook according to their gender. Secondly, this study also aimed to study the teachers' readiness to implement it. This study also intends to explore the challenges encountered by the teachers in the adoption of the PULSE 2 textbook in the classroom. One hundred fifty-five teachers from various secondary schools in Johor Bahru participated in this study. The data for this study were collected from questionnaire consisted both close-ended and open-ended items was distributed to the teachers via Google Form platform. The findings revealed that majority of the teachers had positive perceptions toward the implementation of CEFR- aligned textbook regardless their gender. The teachers also showed a high level of readiness in implementing the CEFR-aligned textbook as majority of the teachers claimed to have broad knowledge about CEFR and received adequate trainings and courses related to CEFR. Despite the high level of readiness among the teachers, they still claimed to encounter challenges while implementing it. The challenges encountered by the teachers came from various aspects such as the workload increment, time-constraint, insufficient CEFR-based teaching materials, lack of technological resources and students with low level of proficiency. In conclusion, the adoption of the CEFR-aligned textbook in Malaysia is seen as obligatory but sufficient training, teaching materials, time, and technological resources should be given to the teachers to make sure the framework can be implemented effectively.

ABSTRAK

Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR) telah diperkenalkan ke dalam sistem pendidikan negara ini beberapa tahun yang lalu dan reformasi kurikulum telah berlaku berikutan keadaan ini. Para guru kini harus menggunakan buku teks baru untuk menggantikan buku teks sebelumnya dalam pengajaran Bahasa Inggeris di dalam kelas pengajaran Bahasa Inggeris. Guru perlu menyesuaikan diri dengan reformasi kurikulum baru ini dan persepsi mereka terhadap pelaksanaan ini mesti dipertimbangkan kerana mereka adalah medium antara buku teks dan pelajar. Kajian ini bertujuan untuk menyelidik persepsi guru terhadap pelaksanaan buku teks CEFR berdasarkan jantina mereka. Kedua, kajian ini juga bertujuan untuk mengkaji kesediaan guru untuk melaksanakannya. Kajian ini juga bertujuan untuk meneroka cabaran yang dihadapi oleh guru dalam penggunaan buku teks PULSE 2 di dalam kelas. Seratus lima puluh lima guru dari pelbagai sekolah menengah di Johor Bahru mengambil bahagian dalam kajian ini. Data untuk kajian ini dikumpulkan dari borang soal selidik yang diedarkan kepada guru melalui platform Google Form. Hasil kajian menunjukkan bahawa majoriti guru mempunyai persepsi positif terhadap pelaksanaan buku teks yang diselaraskan CEFR tanpa mengira jantina mereka. Para guru juga menunjukkan tahap kesediaan yang tinggi dalam melaksanakan buku teks yang diselaraskan CEFR kerana majoriti guru mengakui memiliki pengetahuan luas tentang CEFR dan menerima latihan dan kursus yang mencukupi berkaitan dengan CEFR. Walaupun dengan tahap kesediaan guru yang tinggi, mereka tetap megakui bahawa mereka menghadapi pelbagai cabaran semasa melaksanakannya. Cabaran yang dihadapi oleh guru adalah daripada pelbagai aspek seperti kenaikan beban kerja, kekangan masa, bahan pengajaran berasaskan CEFR yang tidak mencukupi, kekurangan sumber teknologi dan pelajar di tahap penguasaan yang rendah. Kesimpulannya, penggunaan buku teks yang diselaraskan CEFR di Malaysia dilihat sebagai kewajiban tetapi latihan, bahan pengajaran, masa, dan sumber teknologi yang mencukupi harus diberikan kepada para guru untuk memastikan kerangka tersebut dapat dilaksanakan dengan berkesan.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

TITLE		PAGE
DECLARATION		**iii**
DEDICATION		**iv**
ACKNOWLEDGEMENT		**v**
ABSTRACT		**vi**
ABSTRAK		**vii**
TABLE OF CONTENTS		**viii**
LIST OF TABLES		**xii**
LIST OF FIGURES		**xiv**
LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS		**xv**
LIST OF APPENDICES		**xvi**
CHAPTER 1	**INTRODUCTION**	**1**
1.1	Introduction	1
1.2	Background of study	4
1.3	Statements of problems	6
1.4	Research goals	8
	1.4.1 Research objectives	8
	1.4.2 Research questions	9
1.5	Conceptual framework	10
1.6	Significance of the research	13
1.7	Scope of the study	14
1.8	Definition of terms	15
1.9	Conclusion	16

CHAPTER 2	**LITERATURE REVIEW**		**17**
	2.1	Introduction	17
	2.2	Overview of the English educational reforms in Malaysia	18
	2.3	Secondary school situation in ELT classroom	20
	2.4	Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR)	21
	2.5	CEFR descriptors and 'Can Do' approach	25
	2.6	PULSE textbook	28
	2.7	Teachers' perceptions toward the implementation of CEFR-aligned textbook	29
	2.8	Teachers' readiness in implementing CEFR-aligned textbook content	32
	2.9	Challenges faced by teachers in implementing CFER-aligned textbook	33
	3.0	Summary of the chapter	34
CHAPTER 3	**METHODOLOGY**		**35**
	3.1	Introduction	35
	3.2	Research design	36
	3.3	Research population and sample	39
	3.4	Research Instrument	41
		3.4.1 Questionnaire	41
	3.5	Data collection and procedure	44
	3.6	Data analysis	47
	3.7	Conclusion	50

CHAPTER 4 FINDINGS 51

4.1 Introduction 51

4.2 Demographic information of respondents 51

4.2.1 Respondents age and gender 52

4.2.2 Respondents teaching experience and academic qualification 53

4.3 Teachers perceptions toward the implementation of CEFR-aligned textbook in ELT classroom 53

4.4 Teachers' readiness on the implementation of CEFR-aligned textbook in ELT classroom 66

4.5 Teachers' challenges in implementing the CEFR-aligned textbook in ELT classroom 77

4.6 Summary of the chapter 93

CHAPTER 5 DISCUSSION, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION 94

5.1 Introduction 94

5.2 Discussion of the findings 94

5.2.1 Teachers' perceptions toward the implementation of the CEFR-aligned textbook in ELT classroom 94

5.2.2 Teachers' readiness in implementing CEFR-aligned textbook in ELT

	classroom	96
	5.2.3 The challenges faced by the teachers implementing CEFR-aligned textbook in ELT classroom	98
5.3	Conclusion	100
5.4	Implication of the study	102
5.5	Limitation of the study	103
5.6	Recommendation for future research	104
5.7	Summary of the chapter	105

REFERENCES **106**

APPENDICES **113**

LIST OF TABLES

TABLE NO.	TITLE	PAGE
Table 1.1	Level of Stages and Concern	12
Table 2.1	CEFR Levels of Proficiency	22
Table 2.2	CEFR Proficiency Targets	24
Table 2.3	CEFR Descriptors	25
Table 3.1	Table for Determining Sample Size of A Known Population (Krejcie and Morgan, 1970)	40
Table 3.2	Questionnaire Scale	42
Table 3.3	Summary of Data Analysis	48
Table 4.1	Respondents' Age and Gender	52
Table 4.2	Respondents Teaching Experience and Academic Qualification	53
Table 4.3	Analysis of Part A: Teachers' Perceptions towards The Implementation of CEFR-Aligned Textbook in ESL Classroom	55
Table 4.4	Teachers' Perceptions toward The Implementation of CEFR-Aligned Textbook	60
Table 4.5	Normality test	64
Table 4.6	Descriptive Analysis: Frequencies of Teachers' Perceptions Between Groups	65
Table 4.7	Mann- Whitney U Test	66
Table 4.8	Analysis of Part B: Teachers' Readiness on The Implementation of CEFR-Aligned Textbook in ESL Classroom	67
Table 4.9	Teachers' Readiness on The Implementation of CEFR-Aligned Textbook	71
Table 4.10	Open-ended Question Responses	74

Table 4.11	Analysis of Part C: Teachers' Challenges in Implementing The CEFR- Aligned Textbook in ELT Classroom	78
Table 4.12	Teachers' Challenges in Implementing The CEFR- Aligned Textbook in ELT Classroom	83
Table 4.13	Open-ended Questions Responses (a)	86
Table 4.14	Open-ended Questions Responses (b)	88
Table 4.15	Open-ended Questions Responses (c)	90

LIST OF FIGURES

FIGURE NO.	TITLE	PAGE
Figure 1.1	Research Conceptual Framework	10
Figure 3.1	Data Collection and Procedure	44
Figure 4.1	Teachers' Perceptions towards The Implementation of CEFR-Aligned Textbook	59
Figure 4.2	Teachers' Readiness on The Implementation of CEFR-Aligned Textbook	70
Figure 4.3	Teachers' Challenges in Implementing The CEFR- Aligned Textbook in ELT Classroom	82

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

CEFR	-	Common European Framework of Reference
ELT	-	English language teaching
MEB	-	Malaysia Education Blueprint

LIST OF APPENDICES

APPENDIX	TITLE	PAGE
APPENDIX A	Questionnaire	113

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

In Malaysia, the teaching and learning of English was first introduced in the 1960s which is during the British colonialism and it remains as a part of current Malaysian educational system until now. In this country, English is made as compulsory subject in all primary and secondary school and it was taught as a second language due to its demand of use in various situations. Koh (2011) explains that the education systems in Asian countries like Malaysia still does not have adequate research upon the education policy making and is not aligned with other global education policy that leads to gradual standardization; therefore, it is a conventional process which requires time for it to take place. According to Musa et al (2012), a review of research studies conducted to examine English language learning in secondary Malaysian schools reveals that the national language or Bahasa Malaysia has a strong influence over the learning of English. In secondary schools, English language learning is presented as a set of language mechanics with 'fixed' ways in using the language which isolated from its communicative purpose. Framed in this paradigm, the leaning of English will be persistently and continually to be regarded as an alien language to the students.

In order to meet the demand as a result of time changes, innovations, or changes in competitive curriculum and parallel to the world, changes or reform are needed. According to Ngussa et al (2015), curriculum reforms are a significant process that is essential to ensure the functioning of education system and these changes should be expected to take place over time because it will be ironic if there are no changes occur in education system along with other development. Hence, upon addressing the matter

of English language standards in Malaysia, imported English textbooks will be used in schools replacing the locally produced ones to meet the new Common European Framework of Reference for languages (CEFR) levels as announced by the Ministry of education in year 2018 (Lo, 2018).

Recently, the Common English Framework of Reference (CEFR) was applied to act as the guidelines for national educational system which involves various subjects including English in this country. According to Lo (2018), a new scheme of work came together with this curriculum reform will affect the learning and teaching of English in schools. Currently, the scheme of work being used are divided into two lesson: textbook based and non-textbook based. In addition, a new textbook which is called PULSE 2, has been imported and used in English lessons. Over the years before, as stated by Mukundan & Kalajahi (2013), the teachers reported that the current Year 1 to Year 6 textbooks are highly beneficial to the students, whereas Form 1 to Form 5 teachers contended that the school books are moderately useful in the schools. Hence, this new curriculum reformation will surely change the teachers' view towards the use of textbook in the classroom.

However, changes that occur in curriculum do not always assure and promise success or development to happen especially in a short span of time. According to Nurul Awanis et al (2011), curriculum reform is most likely to achieve its effectiveness with the existence of various resources together with supporting factors that can influence changes as well as teachers' beliefs in implementing the new curriculum in the classroom. According to Chandran (2003), some English teachers in Malaysia have always been omitting the use of textbook even though the usage of textbook has been highlighted in the scheme of work during those periods. This new scheme of work has given the teachers more freedom to utilize other teaching materials available in the market.

Recently, the Common English Framework of Reference (CEFR) was exerted as the guidelines for national educational system involving various subjects including English. Chandran (2003) states that some Malaysian English teachers have always been omitting the use of textbooks in teaching even though the scheme of work during those periods highlighted the usage of textbooks. The new scheme of work gives teachers more freedom to utilize other teaching materials there are in the market. Therefore, this study aims to investigate on how the teachers perceive this new textbook and the challenges that they have to encounter while using the CEFR-aligned textbook in the classroom.

Over the years, English language teachers in secondary schools have been using the same textbook provided by the Ministry of Education and some of them have been neglecting the use of textbook in English classroom although they are encouraged to use it. However, CEFR-aligned textbook has been introduced into our education now and the curriculum reformation has occurred following to this situation. The teachers now have to use a new textbook with different content from many aspects including the cultural context. Teachers need adapt themselves with this new curriculum reformation and their acceptance toward this situation must be taken into consideration as they are the medium between the textbook with the students.

Hence, this study seeks to respond to this need. The aim of this study is threefold. First, the teachers' perceptions toward the implementation of textbook content with CEFR-aligned in enhancing the secondary school students' English proficiency. Second, the teachers' readiness in implementing CEFR-aligned textbook content in secondary school ELT classroom. Last but not least, the challenges faced by teachers in implementing CEFR-aligned textbook in teaching secondary school students.

1.2 Background of Study

The Star Online (2017) pointed out that the Higher Education Ministry is fully committed to achieve its aim regarding the implementation of the new Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) in 2018. The Deputy Education Minister ; Datuk P Kamalanathan stated that preschoolers, Year one and two pupils, and Form 1 and 2 students will be the first to learn with the curriculum (Chin & Rajaendram, 2017). According to Ministry of Education (2017) , the purpose of implementing CEFR is to create a balanced human capital that are able to face the challenges of the 21st century, and also to ensure a holistic and relevant curriculum being implemented.

The aspects that are being covered by the curriculum transformation to CEFR are the content, teaching time allocation, pedagogy, assessment methods, organization, curriculum management and materials. In conjunction with the implementation of the CEFR, a new textbook, PULSE 2 authored by Mac Millan was introduced for the use of Form 1 and Form 2 curriculum. Just like previous textbooks, this textbook contents are classified to four themes: People and Culture, Health and Environment, Science and Technology and Consumerism and Financial Awareness. The textbook contains a total of nine chapters: What Do You Like?, Fact or Fiction?, Wild Weather, Life on Earth, Let's Experiment, Money, Journeys, Good Luck, Bad Luck and Take Care. The first four chapters are allocated for the Form 1 students while the rest will be used by the Form 2 students.

Thus, the process of exposing the curriculum transformation also includes the teachers as they are the input provider for the students. Accordingly, the teachers' perceptions toward the implementation of CEFR, their readiness in using the textbook and the challenges faced by the teachers will be taken into consideration for the CEFR implementation process. Therefore, studies on investigating Form 1 and Form 2 English teachers' perceptions toward CEFR, their readiness and the challenges in implementing CEFR-aligned textbook faced by them are necessary.

As mentioned by Aziz (2017), textbook use in the classroom to teach English language has always been a central issue for most teachers as they believed that the potential and creativity of students is being hindered by the use of textbooks. This new scheme of work has set a balance on the use of textbook by necessitating the usage of textbook during textbook based lesson and allowing the teachers to use other teaching materials freely during the non-textbook based lessons. Both of these periods are skill-oriented and the lower level secondary school students which is Form 1 and Form 2 English students consist of eleven-lesson cycle, meanwhile the non-textbook based lessons consist of six-lesson cycle.

This curriculum reform has been practiced since 2017 with Form 1 students from all secondary schools in this country as the first batch to experience it. Subsequently, this changes will also influence in adjusting the assessment methods for Pentaksiran Tingkatan 3 in 2019 to be CEFR-aligned to standardize with the curriculum reform. In other words, this reform is similarly to an experiment and still under supervision to study its success.

Following to the implementation of CEFR in curriculum reformation in year 2018, it has become a new source of word lists as CEFR is the language-neutral guide for levels of proficiency to language that is being learned. In CEFR, there are three groups of user which are Basic User, Independent User, and Proficient User. All these categories are being split into six levels which are A1/A2, B1/B2 and C1/C2 respectively. Although the main components of CEFR levels are communication skills, but there are also vocabulary lists available that act as a guidance to show which words a language learner should know at each level. Now, the English textbooks used are CEFR-aligned, however, the CEFR levels of students in a class may vary widely. Next, the cultural context of this new textbook is also different with the previous textbooks as it highlights the culture of Europe countries.

In addition, (Aziz, Rashid and Zainudin, 2018) argued that the textbook was supposed to work in unison with the new curriculum standard and scheme of work, but teachers were having difficulties in using the textbook as it was intended. This is one of the common problems faced by Malaysian English language teachers (Rashid, Yunus & Wahab, 2018). Developing a textbook is usually being followed by a

completed curriculum. Ironically, in this case it is the other way around, whereby the curriculum is not completed yet the textbook has already completed for quite some time. In primary schools, there is only one textbook for both Year 1 and Year 2 as Year 1 will start using the textbook from Topic 0 to Topic 4, whereas Year 2 started using the textbook from Topic 5 until Topic 9. This has created confusion to students and teachers, especially for Year 2, as they had to start at the middle of the textbook, leading to them missing a lot from the skipped topics. The same situation goes to the secondary school new textbook, whereby students in Form 2 started using the textbook at the middle. On top of that, there are also concerns regarding the imported textbooks to be carrying foreign context in its content (Monihuldin, 2018; Star, 2018).

Despite these hiccups and concerns by local experts, the minister decided to carry on with the plan of implementing the CEFR-aligned textbook in the curriculum. While the teachers are given a course regarding the new textbook, they are constantly reminded to be flexible educators and always be ready to adapt to the new needs and new situations in their classroom, including how to plan their teaching and learning. Nevertheless, in reality the teachers are not allowed to do so (Aziz, Rashid and Zainudin, 2018). Due to the situations mentioned above, this study aims to explore the teachers' acceptance toward the implementation of CEFR-aligned textbook followed by their readiness in implementing it and other challenges that they need to face while implementing this new textbook.

1.3 Statements of Problems

Curriculum reform are usually regarded and expected as improvements in educational system. However, the changes that takes place in the curriculum such as the scheme of work, the use of textbook and assessment methods can be the factors that influence teachers and also students' performance. Currently, the curriculum reformation has brought a number of changes including the replacement of textbook to meet the standardized needs for a language learner. Generally, the main purpose of

the reformation is to create a benchmark for local students' level of proficiency and develop bilingual proficiency (Nurul Farehah and Mohd Sallehudin,2018).

Various kinds of feedbacks have been received regarding the implementation of current curriculum from locals. Among the criticisms, one of the major concerns from the implementation of this curriculum is the content of the textbook, PULSE 2 which might be unfamiliar for many students due to the cultural differences (Aziz,2017). In addition, this textbook also was taken off the shelf without considering of adapting to meet the needs of Malaysian students. It may act as a good exposure to outside world for the students but it also may cause lack of understanding, vocabulary mastery and will affect the students' academic performance.

In Malaysia, 200 secondary schools English teachers acknowledge themselves to be familiar with CEFR and the concept. However, these teachers also showed high levels of concern and anxiety towards the implementation of CEFR in Malaysia because they were uncertain of their roles and lack of information about the changes (Lo 2018). A study was also conducted to compare students in polytechnic levels of English vocabulary and grammar against CEFR descriptors and the findings of the study were made a guideline for the selection of students' representative council (Majdah Mahamud 2018).

There was also a study conducted to find out the views of English language teachers at a public university involving 25 English teachers who taught English proficiency courses. It was found that the teachers' views of CEFR varied, some showed positive attitude and there were also teachers who were unsure how CEFR can fit their language courses (Ramiaida Darmie et al. 2017). These studies show that there are studies conducted in local context, nonetheless it is still very limited as from these previous studies, there are limited studies in examining the teachers' readiness and challenges faced by them in implementing the CEFR-aligned textbook.

1.4 Research Goals

1.4.1 Research Objectives

The aims of the study are as follows:

1.4.1.1 To investigate whether is there any significant difference between male and female English secondary school teachers' perceptions toward the implementation of CEFR-aligned textbook content in ELT classroom

1.4.1.2 To investigate the teachers' readiness in implementing CEFR-aligned textbook content in secondary school ELT classroom

1.4.1.3 To investigate the challenges faced by teachers in implementing CEFR-aligned textbook in teaching secondary school students.

1.4.2 Research Questions

This research study attempts to answer the following questions:

1.4.2.1 Is there any significant difference between male and female English secondary school teachers' perceptions toward the implementation of CEFR-aligned textbook content in ELT classroom?

1.4.2.2 Are the secondary school English teachers ready to implement the CEFR-aligned textbook content in ELT classroom?

1.4.2.3 What are the challenges faced by teachers in implementing CEFR-aligned textbook in teaching secondary school students?

1.5 Conceptual Framework

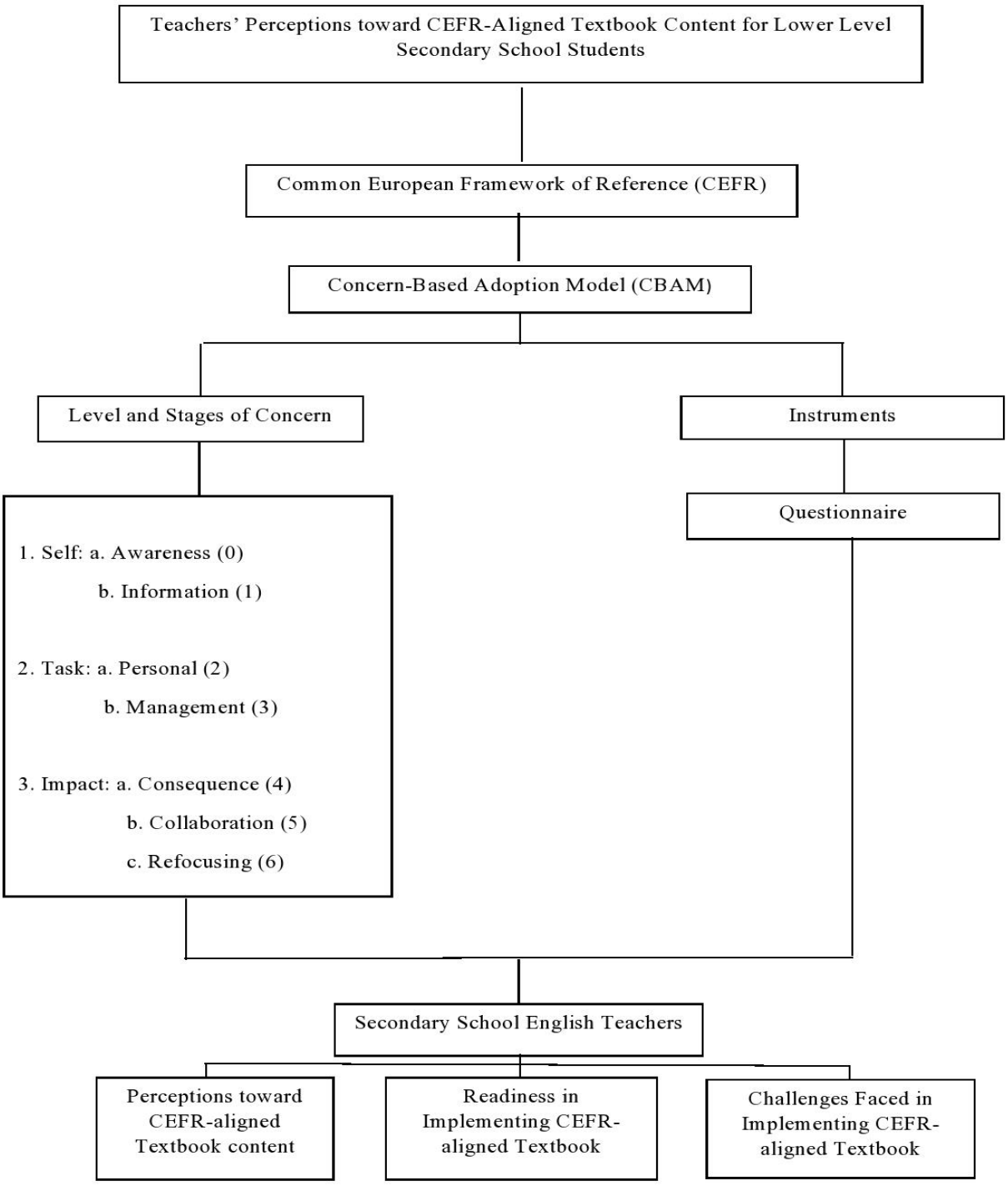

Figure 1.1 Research Conceptual Framework

Figure 1.1 illustrates the vision and concept of this research that the researcher formulated. Initially, the research began with an inspiration based on her curiosity over the newly implemented English language learning reform, the CEFR. The main objective has been narrowed down to investigating the teachers' perceptions, readiness and the challenges faced by them while implementing this new reform. This decision is based on Xu (2012), who opines that teachers are greatly influenced by their "beliefs which in turn are closely linked to their values, to their views of the world and to their understanding of the place within it". They are the key to educational reforms as their willingness to adapt to changes is the crucial key in innovations. They are likely to be the most effective when their beliefs are aligned with demands of the reform (Korthagen, 2004).

The teachers' perceptions will be based on the levels and stages of concern from the model adapted, Concern-Based Adoption Model (CBAM), with a total of 3 levels: i) self, ii) task and iii) impact. Each level has its own stages whereby in the first level, there are two stages which are awareness and information. The second level is the self which consists of two stages also, personal and management. Last but not least, the third level is the impact which has three stages- consequence, collaboration and refocusing. The teachers' perceptions, readiness and challenges faced by them will be gathered by using a questionnaire adapted from the questionnaire level of concern or known as the Stages of concern questionnaire, SoCQ (George et al., 2014) which was constructed based on the CBAM model by Hall and Hord (2014). The findings will then be discussed to fulfil the objectives of investigating the teachers' perceptions toward CEFR-aligned textbook, their readiness of implementing the textbook and the challenges faced by them.

Table 1.1 Level of Stages and Concern

Level of Concern	Stages of Concern	Definitions
Self	0 (Awareness)	The teacher indicates little concern about the reform.
	1 (Information)	The teacher indicates an interest in learning and a general awareness regarding the reform.
Task	2 (Personal)	The teacher is unsure of the demands of the reform, his/her roles and capability to meet the required criteria of the reform
	3 (Management)	The teacher focuses on the process of implementing the tasks of the reform, makes use of available resource and prepares to adapt the changes
Impact	4 (Consequence)	The teacher focuses on the impacts that might be caused by the reform
	5 (Collaboration)	The teachers work cooperatively with other colleagues to improve the effectiveness of the reform.
	6 (Refocusing)	The teacher focuses on finding ways to improve the reform in terms of benefits that can be withdrawn from it.

1.6 Significance of The Research

Ministry of Education (2015), stated that CEFR was firstly introduced in Malaysia together with the introduction of English Language Education Roadmap 2015-2025 (ELER) as a part of the implementation with Malaysia Education Blueprint 2013-2025 (MEB). This comes with the establishment of English Language Standards and Quality Council (ELSQC) which consists of individual who are the expertise in the field of English Language Teaching (ELT) in Malaysia. The members of this council was appointed to give assistance to English Language Teaching Center (ELTC). These two parties were responsible to craft effective ways to improve and increase English language proficiency of Malaysian students. Hence, the planning and development of CEFR was commenced.

The alignment of the English language curriculum which incorporates CEFR is essential in aiming to increase the level of Malaysian students' education to international standards (Hazita Azman, 2016). CEFR descriptors are the standards known to be the guideline in setting the target for each educational level and capacity building as stated by Nurul Farehah & Mohd Sallehhuddin (2018). In addition, there are several aspects of the curriculum reform being implemented in Malaysia. The aspects are distinct from the previous reforms such as the scheme of work, resources, content and learning standards, cross-curricula elements, and differentiation strategies in teaching (Abdul Hakim Ali Abdul Aziz et al., 2018).

In the initial process of dissemination of the reform, a method of training known as the Cascade Training Model was chosen by the ELSQC. In his article, Suzuki (2008) points out that the Cascade Training Model is a "a mechanism delivering training messages from trainers at the central level to trainees at the local level through several layers, is largely used for in-service training, as it can deliver many trained teachers quickly and economically." Furthermore, the Ministy of Education (2015) defines the training as a method that "involves the transmission of information from a small initial group to successively larger groups. A small group known as Master Trainers are first trained themselves, and then sent out to train their

own groups. The second groups of trainees become trainers and train their own groups, and so on."

The implementation of the CEFR also has raised so many arguments and one of the most controversial issue is regarding the content of PULSE textbook that is too wide and may cause difficulties for local learners to bridge the gap and relate themselves with the situation. The textbook offers a wide range of topics including the legend of King Arthur, Irish beliefs and superstitious, Route 66 and people of Amish. Every education often come with issues hindering it. Hence, in this study, the researcher would like to study the teachers' acceptance upon the execution of CEFR-aligned curriculum that has been implemented for four years now. This was also to study the perceptions of the teachers on this matter based on their gender, their readiness and the challenged they faced.

1.7 Scope of The Study

This study will cover a total of 100 English teachers of secondary schools around Johor Bahru, Malaysia. These teachers will be verified beforehand that they teach English to lower secondary students and apply the CEFR guidelines to ensure the authenticity of their responds.

The data for this research will be attained from questionnaire. The participants will answer the questionnaire. All of the information and data gathered will be recorded for future use for analysis and further understanding. This study is also a short-term study that will take less than a year. This is due to limited resources considering multiple issues such as time, funds, and hassles. In the meantime, the accuracy of the information depends on the understanding, cooperation and honesty of the participants that will answer the questionnaire.

1.8 Definition of Terms

1.8.1 Common European Framework of Reference

The Common European Framework of Reference for Languages or CEFR was formulated in
2001 and designed to establish international standards for foreign language education to cater
to the needs of language learners as well as academics and other professions related to assessment, teaching and learning of languages, Nurul Farehah & Mohd Sallehhuddin (2018)

1.8.2 Malaysia Education Blueprint

The Malaysia Education Blueprint (MEB) is the major policy document driving reform. It is explicit about benchmarking Malaysian student performance against international norms, Bush et al (2018)

1.8.3 English Language Standards and Quality Council (ELSQC)

ELSQC is an independent panel of English language experts comprising 10 members from universities, professional bodies, and individuals who are experts and practitioners in the field of ELT in Malaysia, Ministry of Education Malaysia (2013)

1.8.4 Concern-Based Adoption Model (CBAM)

This model explains a developmental pattern for the feelings and attitudes that individuals experience as the change process evolves; however, individuals progress through these stages are at various rates, Hollingshead (2009).

1.9 Conclusion

This chapter summarizes on the background information of the study that covers the background of research, statement of problems, objectives of the research, research questions, conceptual framework of the research, significance of the research, scope of the research as well as the scope of the research. Overall, this study will be reviewing the newly implemented reform in terms of the teachers' perceptions, their readiness as well as the challenges faced by them. The CBAM will be utilized as a guideline to conduct the study.

In the next chapter, related studies will be discussed to associate with this study involving the reforms of English language education in Malaysia, the overview of the educational reform in Malaysia and implementation of CEFR, the situation in secondary school ESL classroom, past studies on teachers' perceptions, teachers' readiness and challenges faced by them in implementing CEFR-aligned content textbook.

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