

Exploring CEFR Implementation in Arabic Language Teaching: Knowledge, Perceptions, and Challenges Among Teachers

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ABSTRACT

The Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) is now widely used in language education, including Arabic. This study examined how Arabic Language teachers at the Centre for Languages and Pre-Academic Language Development (CELPAD, IIUM) engage with a CEFR aligned curriculum, focusing on their knowledge, perceptions, and challenges. A survey adapted from Ngu and Aziz (2019) was distributed to all staff in the department and included items on familiarity with CEFR, classroom practice, and curriculum implementation. The results show that teachers are generally aware of CEFR and recognise its relevance for teaching and assessment. They viewed CEFR as useful for setting benchmarks and guiding curriculum but reported uneven knowledge beyond the reference levels and difficulties in applying descriptors to lesson planning and student assessment. Teachers also identified the shortage of localized materials, limited training, and incomplete alignment between curriculum and assessment as barriers. These findings show that while CEFR is positively received and valued as a framework, its effective use in Arabic Language teaching requires stronger institutional support, sustained professional development, and resources designed specifically for Arabic.

Keywords: CEFR, Arabic language teaching, teacher perceptions, curriculum implementation

INTRODUCTION

The Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) is widely regarded as a comprehensive framework for curriculum design and assessment in language education. Created by the Council of Europe, its original purpose was to provide consistency across European countries. The framework sets out six proficiency levels from A1 to C2 and places emphasis on communicative competence, learner autonomy, and practical language use (Council of Europe, 2001, 2020).

Since its introduction, CEFR has extended well beyond Europe and now shapes language teaching in many parts of the world. Countries across Asia and the Middle East have adopted CEFR standards to update teaching practices and improve outcomes (Little, 2020). In Malaysia, the framework has been central to reform in English language education. The Ministry of Education launched the English Language Education Reform Roadmap 2013 to 2025, designed to raise national English proficiency through CEFR based instruction and assessment (Kirkpatrick, 2021).

As the English roadmap nears its conclusion in 2025, attention is shifting towards other languages, particularly Arabic. At the International Islamic University Malaysia (IIUM), the Centre for Languages and Pre University Academic Development (CELPAD) has already taken steps in this direction. Since 2019, CELPAD has introduced CEFR training sessions for Arabic teachers and initiated a curriculum review to align Arabic courses with CEFR standards. At present, Arabic courses at CELPAD are aligned from levels A1 to B2, with an increasing focus on communicative activities and proficiency-oriented assessment.

These developments reflect a broader recognition of CEFR's potential, but also raise important questions about its suitability for Arabic instruction. Unlike European languages, Arabic presents unique challenges due to its

diglossic nature and long tradition of grammar focused teaching. As such, understanding how teachers engage with CEFR in practice is crucial for assessing its effectiveness in this context. This study seeks to address that gap by examining Arabic teachers' knowledge, perceptions, and the challenges they face in implementing a CEFR aligned curriculum at IIUM.

A. CEFR and Arabic Language Teaching

In recent years, efforts to apply CEFR in Arabic instruction have gained momentum. Institutions such as the American University in Cairo and several Islamic universities in Indonesia have piloted CEFR aligned Arabic curricula (Abu Amshah, 2014; Rohman, 2021). Yet bringing CEFR into Arabic education is not straightforward. The linguistic complexity of Arabic, its coexistence of Modern Standard Arabic and spoken dialects, and the persistence of grammar centered teaching all create barriers. Scholars argue that CEFR descriptors need to be adapted for Arabic learners and that localized materials are necessary for successful implementation (Roshaidi et al., 2023; Amrulloh, 2023).

At IIUM, CEFR awareness sessions for Arabic teachers began in 2019 and continued until 2023. Alongside these sessions, the Arabic Language Division launched a curriculum review in 2023 to align its courses with CEFR standards. By now, courses have been structured from A1 to B2 levels, with greater emphasis on communicative activities and assessments based on proficiency.

B. Problem Statement

Although CEFR based Arabic teaching is expanding, little is known about how teachers in Islamic higher education contexts understand and apply it. Much of the literature on CEFR in Malaysia has focused on English, leaving a gap in understanding how Arabic teachers view and implement the framework. The success of curriculum reform depends heavily on teacher readiness and acceptance, making their perspectives central to evaluating CEFR's effectiveness.

This study investigates the knowledge, perceptions, and challenges of Arabic language teachers at IIUM. By focusing on the Arabic Language Division, it contributes to the wider discussion of CEFR implementation in non-European contexts and provides evidence for shaping future reforms in Arabic language education.

C. Research Question

To gain insights into the implementation of the CEFR-aligned curriculum in Arabic language teaching at CELPAD, this study addresses the following research questions:

1. How much knowledge do CELPAD Arabic teachers have on CEFR?
2. How do Arabic teachers perceive the CEFR and its relevance in their classroom practice?
3. What are the main challenges faced by Arabic Language teachers in implementing the CEFR-aligned curriculum?

LITERATURE REVIEW

A. Teachers' Knowledge and Understanding of CEFR

Several studies have examined the extent of teachers' knowledge of CEFR and how far this knowledge translates into practice. Amrulloh (2023), in a study of Arabic teacher candidates in Indonesia, observed that although most candidates were aware of CEFR and could explain its purpose in broad terms, their understanding of the framework remained superficial. The study showed that many of these teacher candidates were unable to explain in detail how CEFR descriptors should be used in classroom teaching, and even fewer were able to link CEFR levels with specific lesson planning or assessment tasks. This highlights a gap between theoretical exposure to CEFR and its practical application, particularly in Islamic education institutions where CEFR training

opportunities remain limited.

A similar finding was reported by Roshimi et al. (2023), who conducted a systematic review of CEFR aligned Arabic curricula. They noted that many teachers could recognize the terminology associated with CEFR, but they often lacked clarity on how to apply proficiency levels or descriptors in real classroom situations. Their review also pointed out that teachers tended to depend heavily on workshop materials or textbooks, which introduced CEFR concepts in general terms but did not provide sustained training or practical examples. This suggests that even when teachers are familiar with CEFR terms, they may not fully understand how to translate them into teaching and assessment practices.

Earlier work by Abu Amshah (2014) also highlighted the same issue, arguing that the absence of structured teacher training is a major barrier to meaningful CEFR implementation. He stressed that both pre service and in service training must include dedicated CEFR modules if teachers are to move beyond a surface level knowledge of the framework. According to his analysis, without structured training, CEFR risks being introduced in policy documents or textbooks but not being applied consistently by teachers.

A more positive view is offered by Nurdianto and Jutshin (2020), who showed that aligning Arabic learning outcomes with CEFR descriptors gave teachers clearer instructional targets. Their study demonstrated that when learning outcomes were explicitly tied to CEFR levels, teachers felt more confident about what they were expected to achieve in the classroom. However, they also acknowledged that this alignment required strong institutional support, as teachers alone could not sustain the practice without curriculum level adjustments.

Collectively, these findings suggest that knowledge of CEFR among Arabic teachers is uneven. While awareness of the framework is growing, many teachers remain at the stage of theoretical familiarity rather than practical competence. The evidence consistently points to the need for structured, sustained training to ensure that CEFR descriptors are not only understood but actively used in lesson planning and assessment.

B. Teachers' Perceptions of CEFR

Teachers' perceptions play a central role in whether CEFR is accepted and applied in the classroom. In the Malaysian ESL context, Karim and Sulaiman (2023) found that primary school teachers generally viewed CEFR positively, particularly because it provided clearer objectives and benchmarks for language learning. However, they also noted that many teachers expressed concerns about the gap between CEFR's expectations and classroom realities, especially when resources and training were limited. This shows that even when teachers appreciate CEFR as a framework, they remain cautious about its practical implementation.

A similar pattern was observed by Uri and Aziz (2024), who studied Malaysian teachers using imported CEFR textbooks. They reported that while teachers valued the structure of CEFR materials, they often had to make substantial adaptations to suit local cultural and linguistic contexts. This indicates that perceptions of CEFR are shaped not only by its content but also by how well its resources align with the needs of students.

In the case of Arabic education, perceptions have been more varied. Abu Amshah (2014) reported that Egyptian teachers were initially cautious about CEFR, questioning whether descriptors designed for European languages could capture the structures and traditions of Arabic. Rohman (2021) described a more mixed response in Indonesia, where some Arabic teachers welcomed CEFR as a way to standardize proficiency levels, while others expressed doubts about its applicability to Arabic instruction.

Overall, the literature suggests that teachers generally perceive CEFR as useful for providing benchmarks and structuring learning, but their acceptance is conditional. Teachers remain attentive to the cultural and linguistic fit of the framework, and where CEFR is seen as mismatched with Arabic structures or teaching traditions, their support becomes more guarded.

C. Challenges in Implementing CEFR in Arabic Language Teaching

The literature also points to several challenges in implementing CEFR in Arabic teaching. Salwa (2021), in her

critical review, highlighted a lack of training, insufficient localized resources, and institutional resistance as the main barriers. She noted that Quranic Language teachers in particular struggled to reconcile CEFR descriptors with the aims of Quranic instruction, which traditionally emphasize memorization and comprehension of classical texts rather than communicative skills.

The issue of descriptors was also emphasized by Rasha (2018), who argued that CEFR's categories, developed primarily for European languages, do not always reflect the complexity of Arabic. This mismatch makes it difficult for teachers to apply CEFR consistently, especially when dealing with the dual demands of Modern Standard Arabic and Quranic Arabic.

Attempts have been made to adapt CEFR for Arabic. Rohman et al. (2021) created localized indicators aligned with CEFR levels, which demonstrated that it is possible to adjust the framework for Arabic instruction. However, they also acknowledged that such adaptations are not yet widely available and that teachers still lack culturally appropriate tools to use in their classrooms.

Other studies highlight problems of curriculum misalignment. Abu Amshah (2014) noted that while some textbooks incorporated CEFR inspired content, assessment practices often remained unchanged, resulting in inconsistency. Similarly, Roshimi et al. (2023) found that curriculum documents frequently introduced CEFR in principle but gave little practical guidance for teachers, leaving them to implement the framework without sufficient institutional support.

Finally, Amrulloh (2023) stressed that many teachers experience CEFR mostly at the level of theory rather than practice. Without hands on training, they struggle with lesson planning, assessment, and monitoring student progress in line with CEFR descriptors. This further limits the extent to which CEFR can be meaningfully applied in Arabic classrooms.

Another consideration in applying CEFR to Arabic is its diglossic nature. Arabic operates in multiple varieties, including Modern Standard Arabic and regional dialects, each used for different communicative purposes. Soliman (2017) argues that effective CEFR alignment requires acknowledging how native speakers shift between varieties depending on context, and that a CEFR-based curriculum which focuses solely on MSA risks misrepresenting real language use. This highlights the need for adaptation when applying CEFR to Arabic so that instructional goals reflect both formal and everyday communicative functions.

However, linguistic variation is only one dimension of the adaptation required. CEFR implementation in Arabic must also be considered in relation to the cultural and pedagogical traditions that shape Arabic language teaching. In Quranic and Islamic learning contexts, instruction has historically prioritised textual interpretation, memorisation, and grammatical precision, reflecting a focus on accuracy and reverence for the language. These aims differ from the communicative, learner-centred orientation assumed by CEFR descriptors, which emphasise real-world language use and interactive competencies. Therefore, aligning CEFR with Arabic involves a process of localization, in which descriptors are interpreted and adapted to support the goals of classical text engagement rather than replacing them. This approach aligns with broader theories of language standardisation, which argue that global frameworks must be negotiated and reshaped within local educational traditions to ensure meaningful and coherent implementation.

This theoretical perspective provides a useful foundation for understanding the challenges outlined in the literature, indicating that implementation issues stem not only from training or material constraints but also from deeper linguistic and pedagogical alignments that must be addressed.

Taken together, these studies show that the challenges in implementing CEFR are both structural and practical. Teachers face barriers in terms of training, resources, and institutional support, but they also encounter conceptual issues in applying descriptors designed for European languages to the Arabic context. These overlapping challenges explain why CEFR remains difficult to implement effectively in Quranic and Arabic language classrooms, even where awareness and policy support are present.

METHODOLOGY

This study employed a survey-based design in order to examine Arabic language teachers' knowledge, perceptions, and challenges in implementing a CEFR aligned curriculum. The focus was on the Arabic Language Division (QLD) at CELPAD, IIUM, and the survey was distributed to all staff in the division. This approach was selected because it provided a direct way of capturing both the breadth of teachers' experiences and their individual perspectives.

The survey instrument was adapted from Ngu and Aziz (2019) and divided into three main sections. The first section gathered demographic information, including gender, years of teaching experience, and current position within the department. This was necessary to establish the background of the respondents and to allow for comparisons across groups where relevant.

The second section was designed to measure knowledge of CEFR. It consisted of six items, five of which were multiple choice questions and one open-ended item. The open-ended question asked respondents to list aspects of CEFR beyond the commonly known reference levels. This was included to test the depth of their understanding and to distinguish between surface-level familiarity and more substantial knowledge.

The third section explored teachers' perceptions and challenges in relation to CEFR implementation. It contained sixteen items measured on a Likert scale. These items asked respondents to evaluate the usefulness of CEFR, their confidence in applying it, and the difficulties they faced in using CEFR descriptors for lesson planning, student assessment, and classroom monitoring. Challenges such as differentiating student performance, adapting teaching materials, and working within a student-centred framework were included because these had been identified as recurring issues in earlier studies (Abu Amshah, 2014; Rohman, 2021; Salwa, 2021).

The survey was distributed to all staff members in the QLD, and responses were collected in full. The data were analysed using descriptive statistics to provide an overview of knowledge levels, perceptions, and challenges. The open-ended responses were read and grouped thematically to capture recurring patterns in teachers' views. This combined approach allowed the study not only to quantify teachers' familiarity with CEFR but also to highlight the practical concerns that emerged from their own words.

RESULTS

The results of the survey provide an overview of the Arabic Language Division staff's knowledge of CEFR, their perceptions of its use in Arabic teaching, and the challenges they face in applying it in practice.

Table 1 presents the demographic characteristics of the participants. A total of 31 staff members from the Arabic Language Division responded to the survey, consisting of 17 males (55%) and 14 females (45%). In terms of teaching experience, the majority of respondents (61%) had taught for more than 20 years, while 21% reported between 11 and 20 years, and 18% had 1 to 5 years of experience. With regard to divisional roles, 52% of the respondents were ordinary lecturers, while 48% held key positions such as coordinators or senior academic roles, indicating a balanced mix of perspectives from both leadership and teaching staff. The respondents represented a mix of genders, teaching experience, and divisional positions. This provided a reasonably balanced view of the division as a whole, ensuring that the results reflect perspectives across different levels of seniority and teaching backgrounds.

Table I Demographic Profile of Respondents

Participant Characteristics	Sub Profile	Percentage
Gender	Male	55%
	Female	45%
Years of Teaching	1–5 years	18%

Position in Department	11–20 years	21%
	More than 20 years	61%
	Key personnel	48%
	Ordinary lecturer	52%

A. Knowledge And Familiarity of CELPAD Arabic Language Teachers Have On CEFR

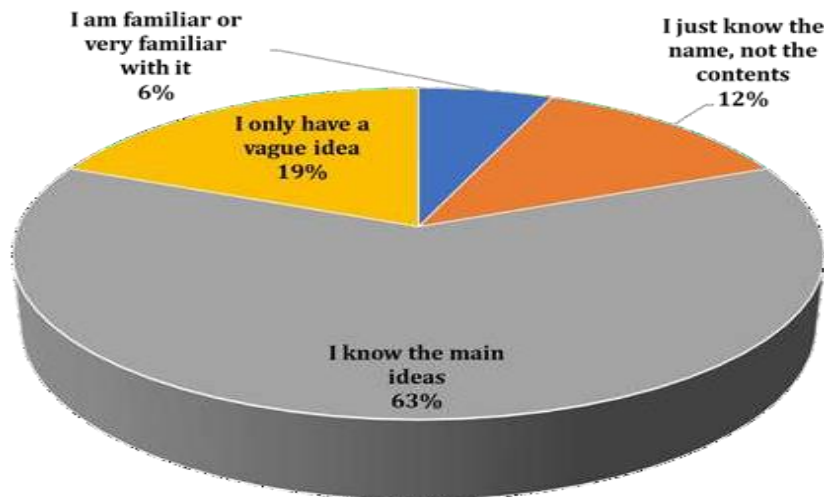


Fig.1 Familiarity with CEFR

As shown in Figure 1, 63% of respondents reported that they know the main ideas of CEFR, reflecting a substantial grasp of its foundational concepts. Meanwhile, 13% indicated having only a vague idea of the framework, and 12% stated that they only know the name without deeper understanding. More positively, 6% described themselves as familiar with CEFR in greater detail. These findings suggest that while most staff possess at least some awareness, a minority still require further clarification and training.

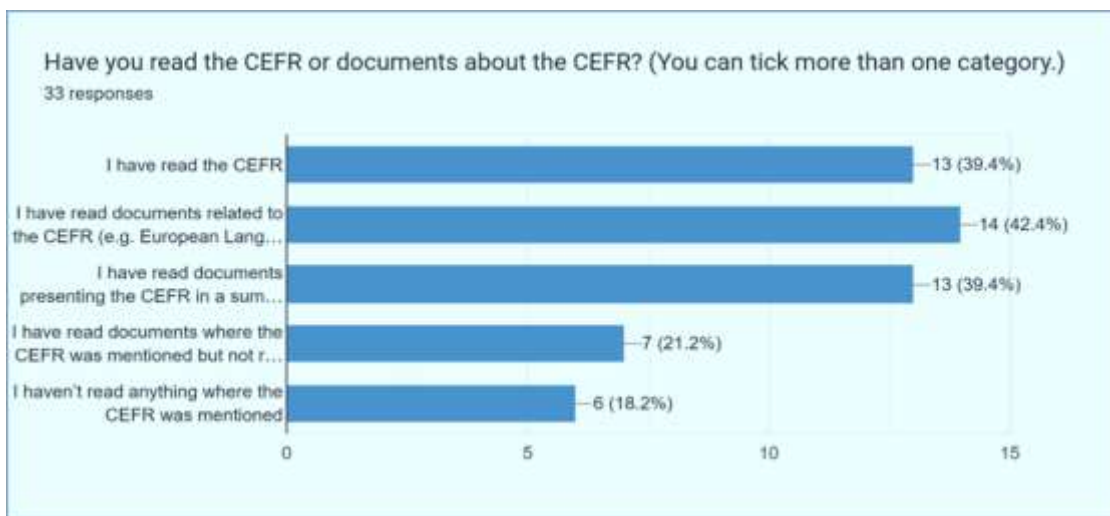


Fig.2 Engagement with CEFR documents

Figure 2 highlights respondents' engagement with CEFR-related materials. A total of 39.4% reported reading the original CEFR document, and the same proportion (39.4%) had engaged with summarized versions. Slightly more (42.4%) indicated reading documents related to CEFR, while 21.2% mentioned encountering CEFR only

in passing references. A smaller group (18.2%) admitted that they had not read any CEFR-related documents. These results reveal varying levels of engagement, with many staff preferring summarized or secondary resources.

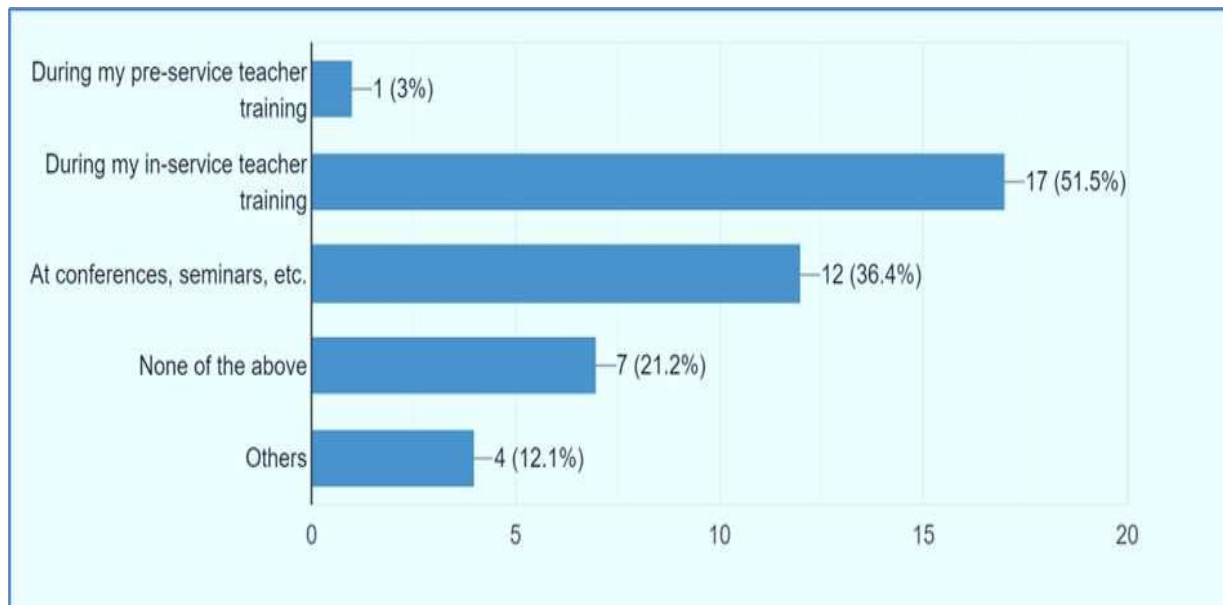


Fig.3 Introduction to CEFR in educational contexts

Figure 3 shows that the most common context for CEFR exposure was in-service teacher training (51.5%). By contrast, only 3% of respondents reported encountering CEFR during pre-service training. Additionally, 36.4% were introduced to CEFR at conferences, seminars, and related events, while 33.3% noted other avenues such as workshops, online courses, or departmental initiatives. As multiple answers were possible, these percentages indicate diverse routes of exposure rather than exclusive categories.

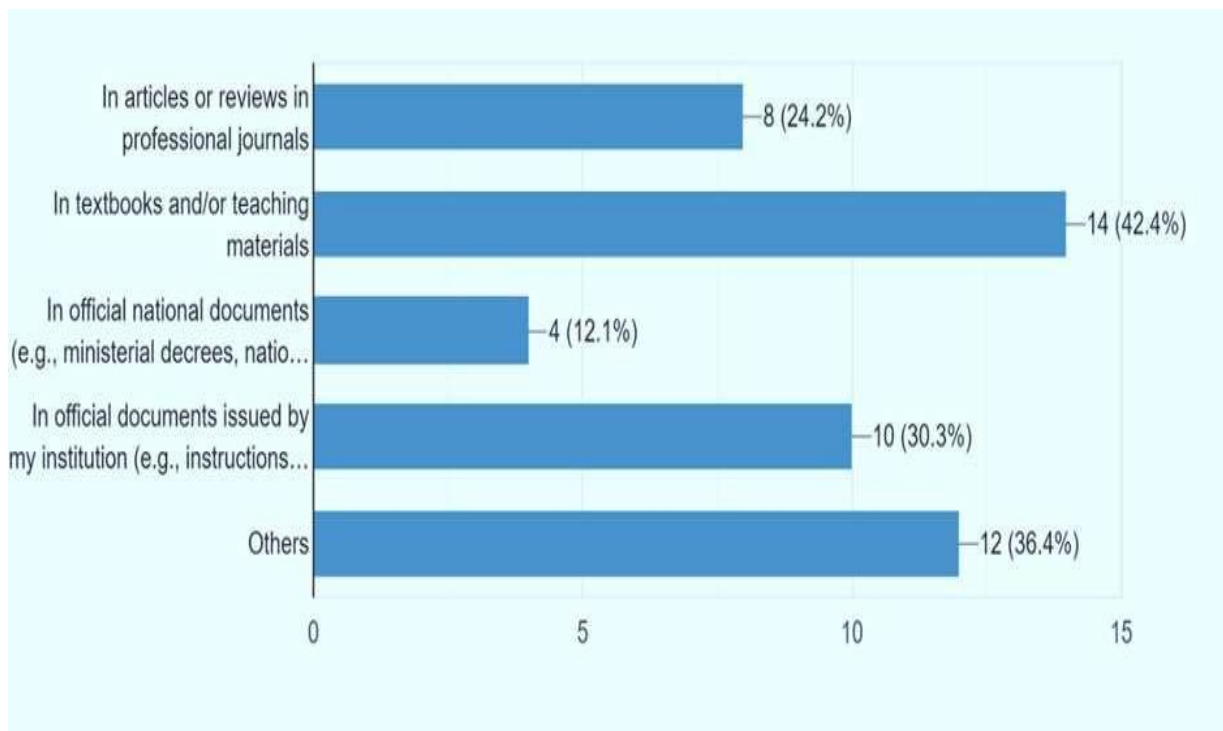


Fig.4 References to CEFR in documents

As illustrated in Figure 4, 42.4% of staff encountered CEFR references in textbooks and teaching materials. Beyond that, 36.4% reported seeing CEFR in other unofficial documents, 31.1% in academic journal articles,

and 30.3% in official institutional documents such as curricula, syllabuses, and examination guidelines. This suggests that CEFR is present in a wide range of resources, with textbooks emerging as the most common medium.

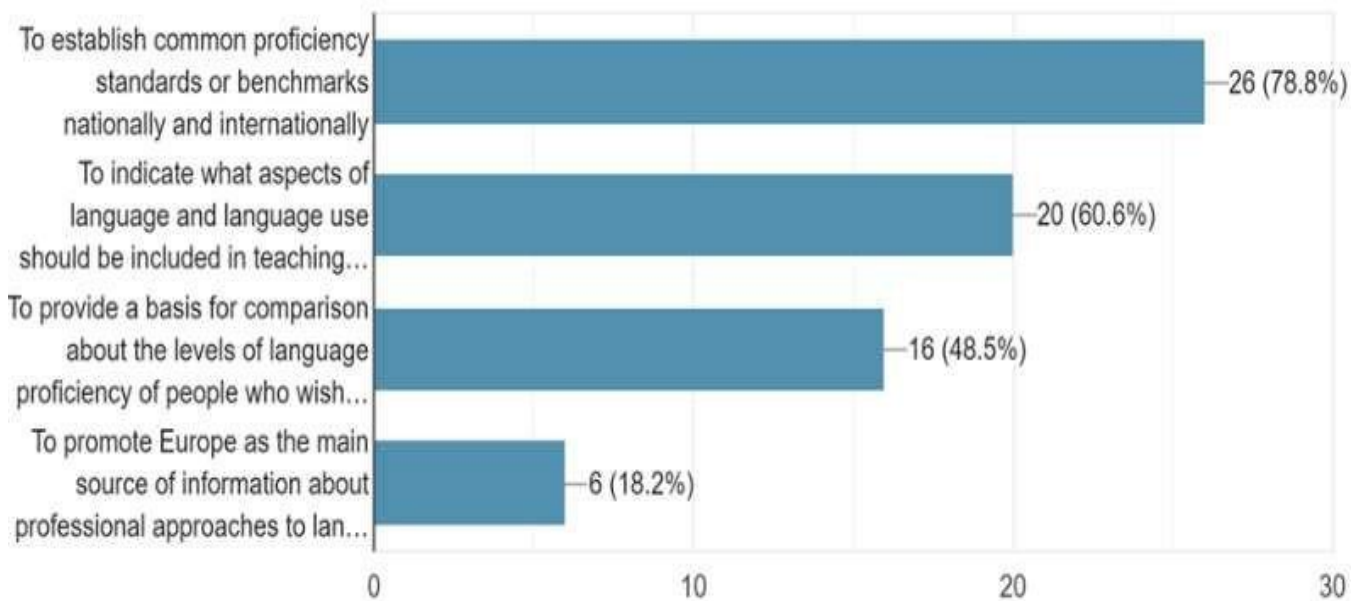


Fig.5 Purposes of CEFR

According to Figure 5, all respondents (100%) acknowledged CEFR's central purpose of providing global proficiency standards. More than half (57.4%) recognized its value in guiding curriculum development, while 45.9% highlighted its role in facilitating international mobility through comparable proficiency benchmarks. Only 1.6% associated CEFR with its European origins, suggesting that staff perceive CEFR as a broadly applicable framework rather than a Europe-specific tool. As multiple responses were permitted, these percentages reflect overlapping perceptions of CEFR's functions.

In the final knowledge-related item, participants listed three aspects of CEFR they were familiar with beyond reference levels. Common responses included:

1. provides standardization,
2. contains "Can Do" statements,
3. is internationally recognized,
4. serves as a reference point,
5. allows localization,
6. encompasses all language skills, and
7. applies to all languages.

Most teachers reported familiarity with CEFR and could identify its main function as a framework for language proficiency. Nearly all respondents recognized the six reference levels from A1 to C2, which appeared to be the most widely understood feature of the framework. However, when the survey required respondents to identify additional aspects of CEFR beyond the levels, only a smaller proportion were able to do so. The most common responses referred to communicative descriptors, but only a few teachers mentioned learner autonomy or the broader role of CEFR in assessment.

The multiple-choice questions reinforced this trend. Teachers generally showed awareness of CEFR's overall purpose but displayed uneven knowledge when it came to the more detailed elements of the framework. This indicates that while basic familiarity is widespread, depth of understanding is less consistent.

B. Perception of Arabic CELPAD Teachers On CEFR And Its Relevance in Their Classroom Practice

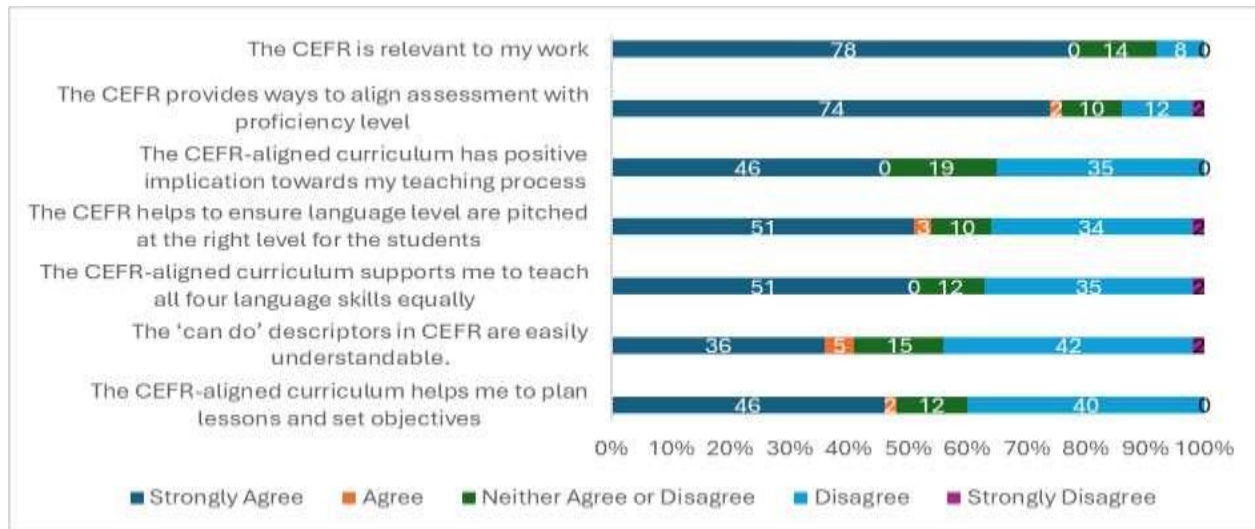


Fig.6 Benefits to Teachers

Figure 6 illustrates that teachers generally hold positive perceptions of the CEFR-aligned curriculum. A majority (76%) agreed that CEFR effectively aligns assessments with proficiency levels, while 54% felt it ensures appropriate language targeting. Around half of the respondents perceived benefits for lesson planning and setting objectives (48%) and for teaching all four language skills equally (51%). However, 56% of teachers indicated that the 'can do' descriptors could be more understandable, and 52% expressed neutrality or disagreement regarding the curriculum's usefulness in lesson planning. Importantly, 92% of participants considered CEFR relevant to their work.

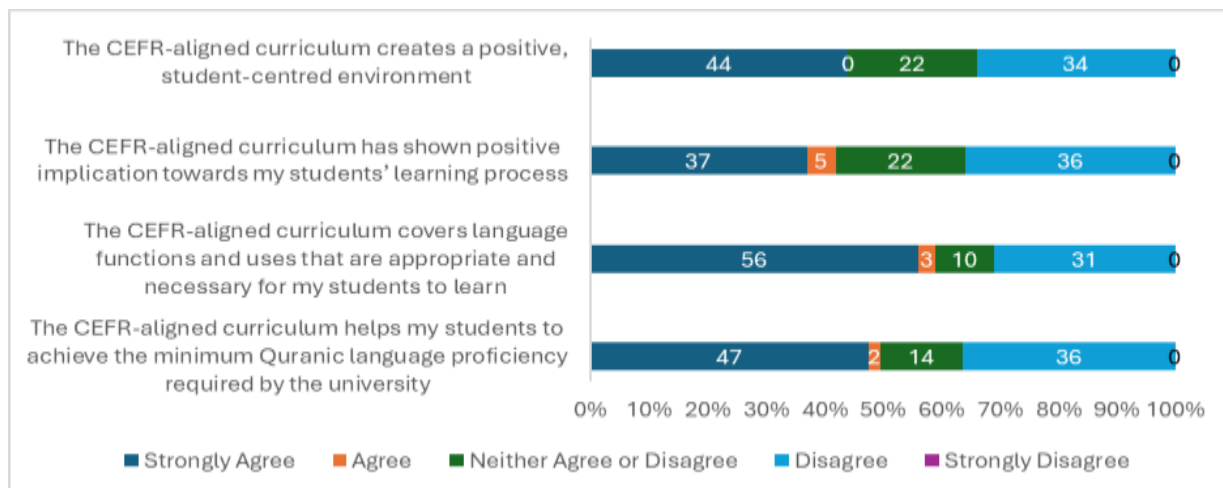


Fig.7 Benefits to Students

Figure 7 highlights teachers' perceptions of the curriculum's impact on students. More than half (56%) strongly agreed that CEFR covers essential language functions necessary for learning, while only 3% disagreed. About 47% felt it helps students achieve the minimum Arabic language proficiency required by universities, though 36% disagreed. Regarding creating a student-centered environment, 44% strongly agreed, while 34% disagreed. Similarly, 37% believed CEFR positively affects students' learning processes, contrasted by 36% who did not see such benefits.

Responses to the perception items showed that teachers had a generally positive view of CEFR. Most agreed that CEFR provides useful benchmarks and clearer goals for teaching Arabic. Many also indicated that they valued having a recognized standard to guide their teaching and curriculum planning.

At the same time, several reservations were recorded. Some teachers noted that CEFR descriptors did not always match their classroom needs, particularly in the context of Arabic Language teaching. Others explained that while CEFR emphasizes communicative skills, their courses also focus on memorization, recitation, and classical text comprehension, which are not directly reflected in the descriptors.

C. Challenges Faced by Teachers in Implementing The CEFR-Aligned Curriculum

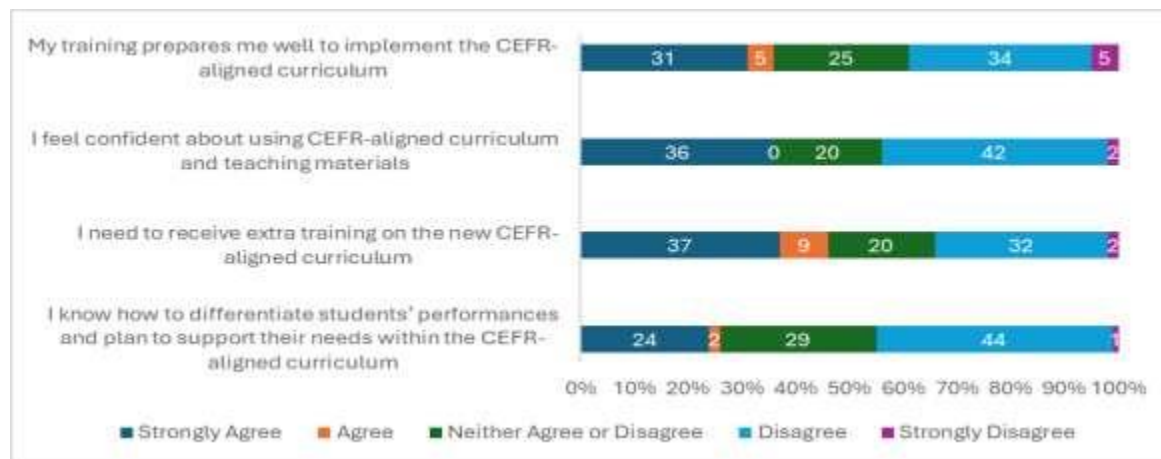


Fig. 8 Challenges in implementation of CEFR aligned curriculum

Figure 8 presents the teachers' perspectives on the challenges encountered when implementing the CEFR-aligned curriculum. Only 31% felt that their training adequately prepared them for the curriculum, while just 5% strongly agreed. Conversely, a substantial 34% disagreed, highlighting the need for more comprehensive professional development. Regarding confidence in using CEFR-aligned materials, 36% reported feeling confident, whereas 42% expressed uncertainty. Many teachers (37%) indicated that additional training would be beneficial, with 9% strongly agreeing. Furthermore, 44% reported difficulties in differentiating students' performances and providing appropriate support, while only 25% felt confident in monitoring and evaluating student progression in a student-centred environment, leaving 41% uncertain.

The survey also included items on the challenges teachers encountered in applying CEFR. The most common challenge reported was difficulty in using descriptors for lesson planning and assessment. Teachers noted that the descriptors often appeared abstract and were not always easy to translate into practical classroom tasks.

Another frequently mentioned challenge was the lack of suitable localized materials. Several respondents explained that many CEFR aligned resources available to them were adapted from English or other languages and required significant modification before they could be used effectively in Arabic classes.

Institutional issues were also reported. Some teachers stated that while the curriculum had been aligned with CEFR, assessment practices and teaching approaches were not fully consistent with the framework. Others highlighted the lack of sustained training, observing that short workshops had raised awareness but did not provide enough guidance for long term application.

Overall, the results show that teachers in the Arabic Language Division are broadly aware of CEFR and view it positively, but their detailed knowledge is uneven. They recognize its potential value but face practical challenges in applying descriptors, finding localized resources, and adapting CEFR to the specific needs of Arabic and Quranic teaching.

DISCUSSION

A. Main Findings

The integration of CEFR into Arabic language teaching has been promoted in Malaysia as part of broader efforts

to align language education with international standards. While much of the focus has been on English, CELPAD has introduced CEFR into its Arabic curriculum and trained staff accordingly. This study examined how Arabic Language teachers at CELPAD understand and apply CEFR in their teaching, focusing on knowledge, perceptions, and the challenges encountered. The findings show that teachers are generally aware of CEFR and accept its relevance, but uneven knowledge beyond the reference levels and difficulties in applying descriptors to lesson planning and assessment remain. Teachers also reported the shortage of localized resources, limited training, and incomplete alignment between curriculum, assessment, and classroom practice as barriers to effective implementation.

B. Demographics

The demographic profile highlighted in Table 1 shows that most participants were highly experienced educators, with a fairly even distribution between leadership and regular teaching staff. This suggests that the sample primarily comprised senior and experienced lecturers. These background characteristics provide valuable context for interpreting the findings, as experience and role responsibilities may influence teachers' knowledge, perceptions, and attitudes towards CEFR.

C. Knowledge and Familiarity

The first section of the survey examined knowledge of CEFR. Most teachers reported familiarity with the framework and were able to identify its six reference levels from A1 to C2. This was the most widely recognized feature. However, when required to identify further aspects of CEFR beyond the levels, responses were limited. Only a small number of teachers mentioned communicative descriptors, learner autonomy, or the use of CEFR as an assessment benchmark. This shows that while general awareness was common, detailed knowledge was less consistent across the group.

The multiple-choice responses reinforced this finding. Teachers could identify CEFR's broad purpose as a framework for language proficiency, but fewer were able to show how descriptors are applied in lesson planning or assessment. This demonstrates that general awareness of CEFR is strong in the department, but practical understanding remains uneven.

In comparison with earlier studies, the CELPAD results appear more positive. Research by Uri and Aziz (2018), Alih, Yusoff and Rauf (2020), Ngu and Aziz (2019), and Chong and Yamat (2021) all reported that teacher awareness of CEFR in Malaysia was limited. In contrast, CELPAD staff showed higher familiarity with the framework. This difference may be linked to the institutional training and integration efforts that have taken place at CELPAD since 2019.

Another feature of the responses was the active engagement of staff with CEFR documents. Several reported that they had read either full or summarized CEFR documents as well as institutional guidelines. This contrasts with the findings of Roshimi et al. (2023), who reported that teachers in their review often encountered CEFR only indirectly through brief workshops or textbook references. At CELPAD, direct engagement appears to have contributed to a more solid knowledge base.

Teachers also identified in-service training as a main source of their exposure to CEFR. This supports the point raised by Abu Amshah (2014), who argued that structured training is necessary for building teacher knowledge of CEFR. The results here suggest that training sessions at CELPAD played an important role in improving familiarity with the framework.

Finally, recognition of CEFR's main functions was evident across responses. Teachers identified its role in setting international standards, shaping curriculum design, and supporting assessment practices. This finding reflects the observations of Nurdianto and Jutshin (2020), who showed that CEFR descriptors can clarify instructional goals for teachers.

Overall, the findings show that Arabic teachers at CELPAD possess stronger knowledge of CEFR than reported in earlier Malaysian studies. Their familiarity extends beyond basic awareness of the levels, supported by direct

engagement with CEFR materials and structured training initiatives.

D. Perception

The perception items showed that most teachers held a positive view of CEFR. Respondents agreed that the framework provides useful benchmarks and clearer goals for teaching Arabic. Teachers also saw value in aligning their courses with an international standard, noting that this situates Arabic instruction within a wider global framework of language education.

However, several reservations were also recorded. Some teachers noted that CEFR descriptors did not always align with the objectives of Quranic Language teaching, where the emphasis is placed on memorization, recitation, and comprehension of classical texts. Others observed that CEFR prioritises communicative skills, which may not correspond directly to the way Arabic is taught in a Quranic setting. These concerns are consistent with earlier studies such as Abu Amshah (2014) and Rasha (2018), who highlighted difficulties in matching CEFR descriptors to Arabic language learning traditions.

Teachers nevertheless regarded CEFR as a useful guiding framework, though their acceptance was accompanied by caution. The data suggest that CEFR is viewed as effective for assessment alignment and curriculum relevance, but its direct application to lesson planning and the use of descriptors remains a challenge. Some teachers also expressed uncertainty in interpreting descriptors, which limited their confidence in applying CEFR consistently in the classroom. This mixed response may reflect the short time that the CEFR aligned curriculum has been implemented at CELPAD, which only began a year before this study.

The responses also showed that teachers believed CEFR can benefit students. Many noted that it supports essential language learning and helps ensure that students reach minimum proficiency levels. At the same time, differences in perception suggest that more time and continued exposure are needed before teachers can fully assess CEFR's impact on student outcomes.

In summary, teachers valued CEFR and recognized its relevance, but they identified areas where additional training and institutional support are needed. Greater clarity in applying descriptors and more guidance in lesson planning were seen as key areas for improvement if CEFR is to be fully effective in the Quranic Language context.

The most frequent challenge was the difficulty of using CEFR descriptors for lesson planning and assessment. Teachers explained that descriptors which appeared straightforward in theory were difficult to apply in practice, particularly in Quranic Language courses where learning goals emphasise memorisation, recitation, and engagement with classical texts. This issue has also been noted by Amrulloh (2023), who reported that teachers often encounter CEFR only at the theoretical level, limiting their ability to interpret descriptors in practical classroom terms. Similarly, Roshimi et al. (2023) observed that fragmented understanding of CEFR descriptors contributes to uncertainty in lesson planning and assessment.

A second challenge concerned the lack of localized CEFR-aligned materials. Respondents explained that many available resources were adapted from English or other foreign language curricula, requiring substantial modification for use with Arabic learners. This reflects findings by Abu Amshah (2014), who argued that misalignment between CEFR descriptors and existing Arabic curriculum structures can hinder implementation. Institutional issues were also reported. While the curriculum had been formally aligned with CEFR, assessment practices and teaching approaches were not consistently modified, creating uncertainty about how CEFR should be applied across the department. Nurdianto and Jutshin (2020) similarly emphasize that ongoing institutional support is essential for sustained CEFR integration.

Taken together, these challenges reflect the need to align CEFR with the linguistic, cultural, and pedagogical priorities that shape Quranic and classical Arabic instruction. As Soliman (2017) explains, CEFR-based frameworks must be localized to account for the coexistence of classical and spoken varieties of Arabic, as well as the instructional traditions of Islamic learning contexts. Without such localized adaptation, CEFR implementation risks remaining theoretically understood but unevenly applied in practice.

E. Strengths and Limitations

This study offers insight into how Arabic Language teachers at CELPAD understand and apply CEFR, contributing to the limited body of work on CEFR implementation in Arabic language instruction within Malaysian higher education. The focus on teaching contexts involving Quranic and classical Arabic content represents a particular strength, as it highlights how CEFR is interpreted in learning environments where linguistic accuracy, recitation, and engagement with classical texts are central to instructional goals. This dimension is often underrepresented in CEFR research, which tends to focus on modern, communicative language learning contexts.

However, several limitations should be acknowledged. The study was conducted within a single department at one institution, and as such, the findings may not reflect CEFR implementation experiences in Arabic language programmes elsewhere. The use of self-reported survey data may also reflect teachers' stated perceptions and awareness more than their actual instructional practices. Additionally, because the CEFR-aligned curriculum had only recently been introduced at the time of data collection, the study captures an early phase of implementation. Teachers may still have been navigating the transition between established pedagogical traditions and CEFR-based expectations, meaning that longer-term adjustments in practice could not yet be assessed.

Taken together, these limitations indicate that the findings should be interpreted as a context-specific snapshot of CEFR implementation during its initial stage at CELPAD. However, they also underscore the value of the study in documenting how teachers understand and respond to CEFR during a formative period of curricular change, providing a basis for continued monitoring and evaluation as implementation develops.

F. Recommendations and Future Research

The results indicate that teachers would benefit from sustained and practice-oriented professional development. Training should focus not only on conceptual understanding of CEFR but also on concrete classroom applications, including how to interpret descriptors for Quranic and classical Arabic content, design CEFR-aligned lesson plans, and develop assessment rubrics.

Another recommendation concerns the shortage of localized resources. The reliance on adapted materials from other languages creates additional workload for teachers and limits the direct use of CEFR in Arabic classrooms. Developing teaching materials and assessment tools specifically for Arabic, and particularly for Quranic content, would support more consistent application. This should be carried out through collaboration between curriculum designers, subject experts, and language educators to ensure both linguistic and cultural suitability.

Institutional support also requires strengthening. The findings suggest that while CEFR has been introduced at the curriculum level, assessment and teaching practices have not been fully aligned. Coordinated efforts at the departmental and university level are needed to integrate CEFR into teaching, learning, and evaluation in a consistent manner.

For future research, there is a need to expand beyond a single department. Studies that include multiple faculties and institutions would provide a broader picture of how CEFR is being applied in Arabic education across Malaysia. Classroom observations and analysis of assessment outcomes would also be valuable to complement survey data, as they can provide direct evidence of how CEFR is shaping teaching practices and student performance. Longitudinal studies would be particularly important, given that CEFR integration at CELPAD is still in its early stages. Tracking teachers and students over several years would provide stronger evidence of the impact of CEFR on learning outcomes.

CONCLUSION

This study shows that teachers in the Arabic Language Division at CELPAD possess a clear awareness of CEFR and recognise its value as a framework for language teaching. Teachers viewed CEFR as useful for setting benchmarks, aligning curriculum, and supporting student progress, and they acknowledged its role in improving

teaching quality and ensuring minimum proficiency levels among learners. At the same time, challenges were evident, as knowledge beyond the reference levels was uneven and many teachers reported difficulty in applying descriptors to lesson planning and assessment. The lack of localized resources and the limited depth of training were identified as further obstacles. Despite these challenges, the CELPAD experience demonstrates that structured training sessions and direct engagement with CEFR documents can raise familiarity with the framework more effectively than in other contexts reported in the literature.

These findings reflect the current stage of CEFR implementation in Arabic at CELPAD and show that while CEFR has been adopted in principle and is positively received by teachers, its practical application still requires greater institutional alignment and support. The study therefore provides a reference point for understanding how CEFR is being integrated into Arabic and Quranic Language teaching in Malaysia and highlights both the progress achieved and the barriers that remain.

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