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### **MATERIALS ADAPTATION OF IMPORTED CEFR TEXTBOOKS: TEACHERS' PERCEPTIONS AND PRACTICES**

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### **ABSTRACT**

**Purpose** - This study aims to find out ESL teachers' perceptions of imported CEFR textbooks currently in use in the classroom. Additionally, it seeks to determine how teachers have adapted and localized the contents of these books.

**Methodology** - A total of 331 lower secondary school teachers participated in the survey and six were selected for face-to-face interviews. A questionnaire, utilizing a semantic differential scale ranging from one to six, was administered to collect quantitative data, while qualitative data was gathered through a semi-structured interview protocol.

**Findings** - The results indicate that the majority of the teachers were fully aware of the CEFR imported textbooks currently being used in

schools. Interestingly, more than half of the surveyed teachers (53.8%) agreed that these books were suitable and matched CEFR levels B1 and B2 set for the secondary school level.

**Significance** - Findings from the interviews highlighted the necessity for teachers to adapt materials, although it also meant extra workload for them. As expected, the teachers added, modified, and simplified the contents of the textbooks. In short, materials adaptation is inevitable as long as the imported CEFR textbooks remain the main teaching materials.

**Keywords:** CEFR, materials adaptation, textbooks, teachers' practices, materials adaptation technique.

## INTRODUCTION

Malaysia stands out among the few countries in Southeast Asia that have opted to adopt the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) into its education system. Beyond enhancing the standard and quality of English education, the adoption of CEFR aims to review and revamp the English language curriculum (Shak et al., 2021). The decision marks a paradigm shift from the Standard Based English Language Curriculum (SBEL) to CEFR. Official classroom implementation of CEFR commenced in 2017, during which secondary school teachers were provided with imported CEFR textbooks as the primary teaching materials (Zuraidah Mohd Don, 2019). The implementation has now progressed to phase 3 of the master plan, which involves evaluation, review, and revision of the framework. Overall, the progress of CEFR implementation has been commendable, especially with the support and guidance of Cambridge English.

Cambridge English has also offered guidance on the suitability of CEFR-aligned textbooks for classroom use. Among the textbooks selected for the primary level are Super Minds (Primary 1 and 2), Get Smart Plus 3 (Primary 3), Get Smart Plus 4 (Primary 4), and English Plus 1 (Primary 5). As for the lower secondary level, the chosen books include Pulse 2 for Lower Secondary 1 and 2, Close-Up B1 for Lower Secondary 3, Full Blast for Upper Secondary 4, and English Dictionary for Upper Secondary 5 (Shak et al., 2021). In addition to introducing new textbooks to align with the CEFR-aligned English syllabus, teachers are also sent to various CEFR workshops and

training sessions for professional development, including materials adaptation.

Most materials for teaching and learning are prepared with the aim of meeting the needs and interests of learners who share similar characteristics in the learning process (Tomlinson, 2012). This goal can only be achieved if the content, context, organization, and consistency of materials align with the target learners. However, the imported CEFR textbooks currently in use in Malaysian schools have several shortcomings, such as content that emphasizes British culture and the arrangement of topics that do not align with the new CEFR-aligned syllabus. Consequently, the use of imported CEFR textbooks in Malaysian schools necessitates teachers to master the skills of adaptation. The main reason teachers are required to adapt materials is that the imported books contain foreign subject matter that is unfamiliar and not relatable to the majority of Malaysian students. Nehal (2016) recommends the need for adaptation when materials are not tailored to a specific teaching and learning context which includes addressing learners' needs, wants, and meeting syllabus requirements.

While it has been acknowledged that the current situation with imported CEFR textbooks makes material adaptation inevitable for teachers, they cannot simply decide to adapt without conduct a thorough assessment and evaluation of the proposed changes. These changes cannot be implemented until teachers have fully understood the reasons for adaptation and have selected appropriate techniques. According to McDonough et al. (2013), adoption pertains to whole course books, whereas adaptation focuses on specific parts that constitute the whole. This implies that teachers should adapt gradually, addressing individual chapters, topics and activities.

To adapt, teachers should ensure that there is a match between learners and the adapted materials produced through evaluation and adaptation processes (Rodrigues, 2015). Teachers should also decide on the suitability of materials adaption techniques. Addition is a suitable technique if extra or supplementary materials are needed to enhance quality and effectiveness. According to Rashidi and Safari (2011), adding aligns well with ELT materials content based on learners' culture. Deleting materials that make learners uncomfortable or pose challenges is another common procedure in materials adaptation.

Tomlinson (2012) asserted that materials adaptation should help learners feel at ease and comfortable with the materials. However, deletion has some disadvantages as it may hinder students' development

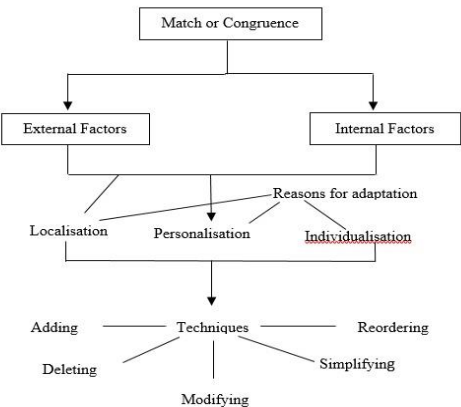
and limit their creativity since they are constantly within their comfort zone (McDonough et al., 2013). Timmis (2016) argued that students need to be pushed beyond their comfort zone and current proficiency levels through challenging activities and materials. With these considerations, the entire process of materials adaptation becomes challenging and daunting for teachers. Teachers must carefully select the most suitable materials adaptation techniques, failure to do so could jeopardize the teaching and learning process. Therefore, it would be best for teachers to refer to existing and established frameworks of material adaptation techniques to ensure proper guidance.

Materials Adaption Techniques

This study employed the framework of materials adaptation techniques by McDonough et al. (2013) (Figure 1). This framework is used to identify the techniques teachers use when adapting CEFR teaching materials. The adaptation process begins by evaluating the materials to determine whether they are a match or mismatch. If adaptation is deemed necessary, the next step is to ascertain whether the need arises due to external or internal factors. External factors relate to the context, background and cultural considerations, whereas internal factors pertain to content, organization and consistency. Common reasons for adapting materials include comprehension questions that are too easy, reading texts that contain many unfamiliar words, and illustrative materials that are culturally inappropriate.

Figure 1

Framework for Materials Adaption (McDonough, Shaw & Masuhara, 2013)



Once the reasons for adaptation are identified, the next step is to decide on the type of adaptation needed; to localize, personalize, or individualize. If materials are adapted to match learners' interests, or academic, educational, or professional needs, it is best to choose personalizing. However, individualizing materials adaption is required if learners' learning styles, are the priority. Lastly, localizing pertains to adapting materials according to geographical factors related to the teaching and learning of English. The subsequent steps in McDonough et al. (2013) involve choosing techniques such as adding, deleting, modifying, simplifying, and reordering. The procedures for materials adaptation techniques are summarized in Table 1.

**Table 1**

*Technique and Procedure for Materials Adaptation*

Technique	Adaptation procedure
Adding	Extra information or materials are added.
Deleting	Omit certain parts which could involve small scale exercises or a largescale removal involving the entire unit of a textbook.
Modifying	Alteration of topics in the textbooks or activities in the classroom.
Simplifying	Simplify instructions, exercises, activities and visual layout of materials to make it easier for learners through rewriting and paraphrasing.
Reordering	Adjustments are made in terms of sequence and organization of some parts of a course book. The reordering should be different than the original form.

**Problems Related to the Imported CEFR Aligned Textbooks**

The books procured by the Ministry of Education based on Cambridge English's recommendations aim to help students broaden their worldviews and promote acceptance of other cultures, lifestyles and religions (Ariz, 2017). However, it has been found that the content of these books is overly British, even though the use of imported CEFR textbooks is intended as a temporary solution until locally sourced CEFR-aligned textbooks are completed. According to a report in a national newspaper, the President of the Malaysian English Language Teaching Association (MELTA), Prof S. Ganakumaran, stated that local experts understood the need to use imported CEFR textbooks

during the early stage of implementation while awaiting the completion of locally developed CEFR-aligned textbooks. Nevertheless, they are overly concerned with the topics in the imported textbooks that do not represent Malaysian culture and context. Urban students, who might have travelled to other countries and read about Western culture might be able to relate to the content. However, students in rural and semi-urban areas might struggle to relate to the topics. Moreover, the authenticity of these imported textbooks, which claim to be CEFR-aligned, is also questioned (Let's have our own textbooks, 2018).

The Ministry of Education Malaysia purchased the textbooks based on the recommendations of CEFR experts from Cambridge, claiming that these textbooks are CEFR-aligned. However, local language experts disagreed with the choice of CEFR-aligned textbooks. These contradictions between experts over the selection of CEFR-aligned textbooks are not a good indicator of the overall CEFR implementation process in Malaysia. Parents, academic and language experts in the country are uncomfortable with and opposed to the idea of using imported CEFR textbooks, even if they are intended for temporary use. They strongly view the use of the imported CEFR-aligned textbooks as absurd and inappropriate, considering the topics are too foreign for Malaysian students, focusing solely on Western culture and context. Not only the topics but also the examples provided in the textbooks are found to be purely based on and too specific to British culture (Monihuldin, 2018). Consequently, scholars, teachers and parents have reservations and do not believe that the Ministry of Education is ready for CEFR implementation yet. This is primarily due to the absence of locally produced CEFR-aligned textbooks and learning materials, which could eventually lead to other problems (Sani, 2018).

### **Issues Surrounding Materials Adaptation**

Considering the problems associated with the use of imported CEFR-aligned textbooks, the topics of these textbooks and resource books have been modified to match students' background knowledge. Necessary changes have been made to the contents of the imported textbooks to meet the needs of local students. These changes and the localization of the textbooks' contents are crucial, as students' familiarity and prior knowledge in the learning process cannot be ignored (Norhana & Chandran, 2009). Before the classroom implementation of CEFR in

2017, teachers were trained to fully equip them with the knowledge of materials adaption. According to the Teacher's Guide Manual prepared by the Ministry of Education, teachers are guided on the process of adapting authentic or published materials as well as designing their materials (Zuraidah Mohd Don, 2019). This implies that the concept of imported CEFR textbooks is still too foreign to be effectively used with students, and the localization attempts made to the textbooks are insufficient despite the ministry's initiatives.

Before the implementation of CEFR in the education system, the textbooks used in school were designed and developed by local experts. These textbooks covered topics intended for Malaysian pupils, with an emphasis on local culture, and were considered a great assistance to teachers in the classroom. However, classroom preparation has completely changed after CEFR implementation because textbooks that were supposed to aid teachers have now become a new burden. Teachers are required to adapt and make necessary modifications to use the imported CEFR-aligned textbooks. The main reasons requiring teachers to adapt the content of these textbooks could be the need to modify the content to help students in the learning process or because the teachers themselves may struggle with the foreign content. Modifying the materials is a burden and extra work for teachers, but they have no choice if they do not want to jeopardize students' interest in learning due to unfamiliar and foreign learning materials.

Studies conducted on CEFR-aligned teaching materials and textbooks show that there are many issues faced by teachers and students currently using them. Abdul Hakim et al. (2018) revealed that material adaptation has caused teachers to work extra hours in preparing their lesson plans. It has also been highlighted that the arrangement of topics in the imported CEFR-aligned textbooks is not synchronized with the new CEFR-aligned syllabus prepared by the Ministry of Education. To make matters worse, using the imported CEFR textbooks is a burden to the teachers since they have to put in extra effort to alter and modify the foreign topics covered in the textbooks. In another study, Rashid et al. (2018) found that teachers are having a hard time utilizing the imported CEFR textbooks because the topics covered do not match the new CEFR-aligned English syllabus and scheme of work. This probably causes teachers to experience mental and physical exhaustion, or they might end up not using the imported CEFR textbooks as instructed by the ministry.

CEFR implementation in the education system requires textbooks and other teaching materials that are also aligned with CEFR. The absence of CEFR-aligned textbooks developed by local experts to cater to the specific needs of learners in a particular country indicates that the plan to implement CEFR should be postponed. Malaysia, for instance, would be able to produce locally developed Malaysian versions of CEFR-aligned textbooks for Malaysian students. Nonetheless, the development process requires a lot of time to ensure that the textbooks produced meet international standards and quality. Moreover, Malaysia faces another major problem in the development of CEFR-aligned textbooks due to the absence of local CEFR experts. As a result, CEFR materials adaptation is inevitable. Therefore, it is the teachers' obligation to ensure that the textbooks used in the classroom incorporate essential elements of language as well as the needs of learners, their language proficiency, and their cultural backgrounds (Mede & Yalcin, 2019). The only way for teachers to make these changes in the classroom is through materials adaptation.

For this reason, teachers have been sent for training related to CEFR materials adaptation and a manual book has also been provided to assist them in the process. While it seems that teachers should not have any difficulties in materials adaptation considering the assistance provided, there is no way to confirm this unless a study on teachers' materials adaptation practices is conducted. To date, several studies have been conducted on teachers' perceptions towards CEFR materials adaptation by Mohd Lukman and Parilah (2020), Nurul Ain and Azlina (2019) and Roberts et al. (2020); unfortunately, these studies only focus on teachers' perceptions.

There is only a single study conducted by Mohd Iqbal and Muhammad Kamarul (2022) that explored the views of primary school English teachers in rural areas on the use of CEFR-imported textbooks and their adaptation strategies. However, this study derived its data solely from in-depth interviews with seven primary school teachers. Therefore, the views of teachers who are teaching at the secondary level have been ignored, and their practices of materials adaptation have not been investigated. Hence, this study is conducted to fill the gap, as it is important to find out secondary-level teachers' common practices in materials adaption and the techniques they frequently adopt. Specifically, the objectives of this study are to find out secondary school English teachers' practices and perceptions towards imported CEFR-aligned textbooks and to explore how they adapt to the imported CEFR English textbooks.



## **METHODOLOGY**

### **Respondents**

A total of 331 English teachers who were teaching Forms 1, 2 and 3 participated in the survey. The total population of the selected area for this study was 2,400 and the population is accurate and valid as it was an official figure from the Ministry of Education. The sample size for this study was determined using the Krejcie and Morgan (1970) reference table. They were chosen using systematic sampling, representing secondary school teachers from three states: Putrajaya, Kuala Lumpur, and Selangor. Moreover, these areas were also recommended by the Council. The teachers were chosen because the majority are senior teachers with at least 10 years of teaching experience or more. Moreover, the teachers involved in this study had already attended several CEFR trainings and workshops organized by the Ministry of Education Malaysia, including materials adaptation training. Most importantly, these teachers were first-hand users of the imported CEFR textbooks such as Pulse 2, Close Up, and Get Smart.

In addition, six teachers out of 331 were selected based on convenient sampling to take part in face-to-face interviews. This number is ideal for data collection purposes since the six chosen teachers provided a sufficient amount of data. According to Koerber and McMichael (2008), rich data provided for a study from a minimal number of two to three samples would be adequate for data gathered via in-depth interviews. Additionally, the data collection process should stop once the data no longer produces new findings or has reached its saturation point (Lowe et al., 2018; Saunders et al., 2018). Hence, data collected from six interviewees would be sufficient for data triangulation.

### **Data Collection and Analysis**

To address the research objectives, two types of research instruments, namely a questionnaire and interview protocol, were employed for the data collection process. The questionnaire comprised 52 closed-ended items with two main sections. Section A included questions related to respondents' demographic background, whereas questionnaire items related to research objective 1 were grouped in Section B. A semantic differential scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 6 (strongly agree) was used for the respondents to indicate their level of

agreement or disagreement, which was then analyzed and interpreted using computer software analysis. Prior to the actual data collection, a pilot study was conducted for reliability as well as validity purposes, the results are presented in Table 2. The items in the questionnaire were considered good and recommended for distribution based on the high value of Cronbach's Alpha.

**Table 2**

*Reliability Statistics*

Cronbach's Alpha	N of items
.886	30
.884	22

The questionnaires were distributed face-to-face to the lower secondary school teachers. The respondents who received the questionnaire were chosen based on the schools' recommendations. A brief introduction was provided during the distribution of the questionnaire process to avoid confusion or uncertainty about the questionnaire items. All the questionnaires were collected after three weeks to give the respondents sufficient time to respond, considering their packed teaching schedule.

Apart from the questionnaire, a semi-structured interview protocol was also used to gather data through a 30-minute interview session with each participant. The interview questions focused on aspects and issues related to the use of the imported CEFR textbooks: Pulse 2, Close Up and Get Smart. The questions also included their views on the textbooks and the approaches they employed in using the textbooks, especially on materials adaptation. Two content and expert panels from local universities with doctoral degrees were assigned to validate the interview questions. The data was analyzed using SPSS and NVivo to ensure the analysis process was conducted systematically. All 331 questionnaires were manually numbered from 1 to 331 during the data entry to ease the process and minimize the possibility of human error. SPSS version 23 was used to process and analyze the data through the means of descriptive statistics. The six interview sessions, which were recorded and transcribed into written form, were analysed using NVivo. The transcribed interview sessions were labelled to ease the process of data analysis and to avoid confusion. Labels T1, T2, T3, T4, T5 and T6 were used to differentiate the responses of the six teachers who took part in the interview sessions. The insights from

the interview sessions were tabulated for presentation and discussion of findings.

## RESULTS

The results from the survey and interview are presented in tables and discussed thoroughly in this section. The discussion of the results categorized according to the objectives of the study: 1) teachers' perceptions towards the imported CEFR English textbooks and 2) teachers' preferred materials adaptation techniques of the imported CEFR English textbooks.

### Teachers' Perceptions Towards the Imported CEFR English Textbooks

**Table 3**

*Teachers' Awareness on the Use of CEFR Imported Textbooks*

Statement	Percentage						Mean	SD
	1	2	3	4	5	6		
I am aware that imported CEFR textbooks for Form 1, Form 2 and Form 3 are available in the schools now.	2.1	3.3	8.8	22.7	49.2	63.9	4.55	1.076
I have not been informed that the imported CEFR textbooks are used as supplementary books temporarily.	2.4	10.6	16.6	16.3	33.8	20.2	2.71	1.369

Table 3 shows the results concerning teachers' awareness of the use of CEFR imported textbooks in teaching and learning. That data indicates that with a mean agreement of 4.55 (SD=1.076), 63.9% of the teachers strongly agreed, 49.2% agreed, and 22.7% slightly agreed that they were aware the imported CEFR textbooks for Form 1, Form 2 and Form 3 already available in schools for the teachers to use. Conversely, the percentage of teachers admitting they were not aware was less than 10% across three scales, with 8.8% slightly disagreed, 3.3% disagreed and only a small 2.1% of school teachers strongly disagreed with their awareness of this. Additionally, 16.3% slightly agreed, 33.8% of the teachers agreed and 20.2% strongly agreed with

a mean agreement of 2.71 (SD=1.369) that they were not informed that the imported CEFR textbooks available in schools were only used as supplementary books, temporarily.

Moreover, beyond the respondents' awareness of the use of imported CEFR textbooks, teachers were questioned about the suitability of these textbooks in Malaysian classrooms (Table 4). When prompted about "the suitability of Form 1, Form 2 and Form 3 English textbooks, exercise books and other teaching and learning materials which conform to CEFR levels B1 and B2 are needed," more than half, or 53.8% of the teachers agreed with this statement, with a mean agreement of 4.73 (SD=.850). This indicates their awareness of the CEFR target levels, B1 and B2. In contrast, 34.7% of teachers, with a mean agreement of 3.54 (SD=1.150), did not agree that only the imported CEFR textbooks and teaching resources are the most suitable for Form 1, Form 2 and Form 3 English syllabuses and assessments.

**Table 4**

*Suitability of the Imported CEFR Textbooks*

Statement	Percentage						Mean	SD
	1	2	3	4	5	6		
Suitable for Form 1, Form 2 and Form 3 English textbooks, exercise books and other teaching and learning materials which conform to CEFR levels B1 and B2 are needed.	-	2.4	4.5	24.8	53.8	14.5	4.73	.850
Imported European CEFR based textbooks, exercise books and other teaching and learning materials are the most suitable for Form 1, Form 2 and Form 3 English syllabus and assessments.	5.4	10	34.7	26.3	21.8	1.8	3.54	1.150
New CEFR aligned textbooks are not needed because the present textbooks are still relevant and meet the demands of CEFR descriptors.	9	10	29	30.2	24.8	5.1	3.17	1.095

(continued)

Statement	Percentage						Mean	SD
	1	2	3	4	5	6		
Malaysian produced CEFR based textbooks, exercise books and other teaching and learning materials are the most suitable for Form 1, Form 2 and Form 3 English syllabus and assessments.	6	2.4	13.9	42	37.5	3.6	4.24	.868

Existing textbooks, although not CEFR aligned, are still perceived as relevant by teachers because they align with the demands of CEFR descriptors. Consequently, 30.2% of teachers, with a mean agreement of 3.17 (SD=1.095), expressed agreement that new CEFR textbooks are unnecessary. However, the majority of teachers agreed that “*Malaysian made CEFR based textbooks, exercise books, and other teaching and learning materials are the most suitable for Form 1, Form 2 and Form 3 English syllabus and assessments*”. Specifically, 42% slightly agreed, and 37.5% agreed, with a mean agreement score is 4.24 (SD=.868). These responses indicate teachers’ trust in local CEFR experts to develop materials that can replace imported CEFR textbooks and resource books.

**Table 5**

*Teachers’ Views on the Imported CEFR English Textbooks*

Question	Responses
What do you think of the imported CEFR English textbooks? How do you find using these books?	T1) I use Get Smart. It is aligned to the CEFR “steps” in acquiring language from easy to more difficult. T2) They are not suitable to be used among Malaysian students as the content can hardly be related to the students’ lives. T3) Even though the topics are interesting, some students have difficulty relating to them as they are very westernized. T4) At first, it was confusing but now I find it so helpful and handy. T5) I am able to use it. T6) Very interesting book.

Apart from the close ended items, it is also important that this study highlights the teachers' insights gathered from the interview sessions. Table 5 shows teachers' personal views on the imported CEFR English textbooks. They were asked to express their opinions on the imported CEFR textbooks currently being used for teaching and learning. The teachers were also asked the question, "How do you find using these books?"

The findings reflect mixed responses among the teachers. Three teachers shared the negative aspects of the imported CEFR textbooks, finding them *"not suitable to be used among Malaysian students as the content can hardly be related to the students' lives,"* according to Teacher 2 (T2). Another teacher (T3) shared a similar view, stating that the content of the textbooks was *"difficult for some students to relate to as it is very westernized,"* despite the list of interesting topics included. Additionally, Teacher 4 (T4) highlighted that the textbook *"was confusing,"* and she needed extra time to truly understand the content and the message the author(s) tried to convey.

Despite the unfamiliar content, other aspects of the textbook, such as the alignment with CEFR, were found to be accurately aligned with the target level. Teacher 1 (T1) stated, *"I use Get Smart. It is aligned with the CEFR 'steps' in acquiring language from easy to more difficult."* Two teachers, Teacher 3 (T3) and Teacher 6 (T6) also highlighted that the topics were interesting and could attract students' interests. The teachers commented, *"The topics are interesting,"* and *"Very interesting book."*

### Teachers' Preferred Materials Adaptation Techniques of the Imported CEFR English Textbooks

Table 6

#### *Usage of the Imported CEFR English Textbooks*

Question	Responses
How do you utilize the imported CEFR –English textbooks?	T1) Refer teacher guidebook, adapt according to students' needs and abilities. T2) I select some of the parts which I think are useful for the students. T3) Despite following the scheme of work, I need to provide extra materials if I think my students are not able to relate to the topics.

(continued)

Question	Responses
	T4) I used all the suggested activities.
	T5) The normal way.
	T6) According and referring to the SOW and DSKP.

Generally, most of the teachers refer to the scheme of work, DSKP, and guidebook provided. Findings of this study suggest that the participants are still not familiar with the imported CEFR textbooks; therefore, it would be best for them to use the textbooks with proper guidance. In addition, the teachers admitted that they adapted the materials whenever necessary. One of the teachers (T1) stated that she would “*adapt according to students’ needs and abilities.*” First, the teachers refer to the guidebook; second, they either consider adding, deleting, modifying, simplifying, or reordering the materials to adapt. One of the teachers (T2) preferred modifying, mentioning, “*I select some of the parts which I think are useful for the students.*”

**Table 7**

*Teachers’ Opinion on Materials Adaptation*

Question	Responses
What is your personal opinion on materials adaptation? It is necessary or an extra workload to teachers?	T1) Necessary because we deal with diverse students. T2) Materials adaptation is necessary to aid students’ understanding which of course means extra workload to the teachers. So, teachers have to do it even if it means more work for them. T3) I think it is something new, fresh and suitable. T4) Necessary. T5) Extra workload to teachers.

The alignment of CEFR framework with the syllabus and assessment of English subject does not stop at conforming to CEFR standards; it also requires teachers to make adjustments to their teaching styles. As such, teachers in Malaysia have been introduced to the concept of materials adaptation during CEFR workshops. The use of imported textbooks and the absence of locally developed CEFR-aligned

textbooks for school use need teachers’ cooperation in adapting the content to suit local contexts. Hence, it is crucial to ascertain teachers’ personal opinions on the concept of materials adaptation.

Table 7 shows that the teachers were quite optimistic and fully understood the necessity of adapting their teaching materials for the students. Two teachers (T1 and T4) stated that materials adaptation is “*necessary*” and “*necessary because we are dealing with different humans*.” Another teacher commented, “*I think it is something new, fresh, and suitable*”. Nonetheless, responses from the remaining two teachers suggested that they were unhappy with materials adaptation, as it means “*extra workload to the teachers*,” according to one of them (T5). Another teacher (T2) stated, “*Materials adaptation is necessary to aid students’ understanding, which of course means extra workload to the teachers. So, the teachers have to do it even if it means more work for them.*”

The most salient point in materials adaptation is finding out how and what the teachers do to the teaching materials. Table 8 illustrates the teachers’ common practices in materials adaptation.

**Table 8**  
*Teachers’ Practices on Materials Adaptation Process*

Question	Responses
How do you adapt the content/ teaching materials in the English textbook to match the CEFR aligned syllabus for Forms 1 – 3? What is your normal practice?	T1) Find my own materials on the internet. T2) Adaptation is through practice and serious focus to understand it better. T3) I usually just refer to some appropriate references workbook or just search for suitable pictures, videos, exercises in the internet which are related to the topic. T4) I usually try to find materials from Malaysian culture so that they can make comparison with the topics discussed in the textbook. As for the teaching materials in the textbooks, the teachers have received strict guidelines on how to use them in the scheme of work provided. If I think the students’ level of proficiency is not on par with the textbook, I will add additional materials to aid them.

(continued)



Question	Responses
	T5) It is good that the CEFR focuses more on the four skills. However, the content in the textbook can hardly be related to students' lives especially students in rural schools. How could we expect students to learn about caravan, the underground when they do not even know about LRT, MRT and other modes of transport available in their own country. Hence, what I always do is conduct the activities in the textbook using my own materials.
	T6) Simplify until the learners understand and can apply what they have learned. Make the materials interesting yet more challenging for fluent learners. Explain or make fluent students explain to their peers about materials that are beyond the climate or culture in Malaysia.

Firstly, the teachers' responses indicate that they would create their own materials to ensure that the teaching materials suit their students, even though it means extra workload. Secondly, there is no standard procedure on how the teachers are supposed to adapt. The teachers have the freedom to adapt materials their own way.

Table 8 highlights two ways the teachers utilized materials adaptation: using the internet and creating materials within the local culture so that students could relate. Materials adaptation is necessary and relevant when the content of the textbook is irrelevant; therefore, it should be adapted to make teaching and materials use more relevant to the students (McDonough et al., 2013).

Some teachers prefer to use existing materials they find online. One of them stated, *"I usually just refer to some appropriate references workbook or just search for suitable pictures, videos, exercises on the internet"* and another said, *"I find my own materials on the internet."* Apart from using the internet, some teachers preferred to create their own teaching materials. According to one of them, *"What I always do is conduct the activities in the textbook using my own materials."* The teachers who were concerned with the content of the imported CEFR textbooks, which do not relate to the local culture, preferred to *"try to find materials from Malaysian culture so that they can make comparisons with the topics discussed in the textbook."*

## DISCUSSION

### **English Teachers' Perceptions Towards the Imported CEFR Aligned Textbooks**

The first objective of this study is to find out the teachers' perceptions towards the imported CEFR-aligned textbooks. In terms of awareness and familiarity, most teachers are aware that the textbooks they currently use in their teaching are imported CEFR-aligned textbooks. The teachers also know that they have to start using the CEFR-aligned textbooks in the classroom, as the Ministry of Education has made the books accessible and available to both the teachers and students. However, the teachers misinterpreted the use of the CEFR textbooks when they assumed that they would be used permanently. Indirectly, this also shows that the teachers did not foresee the Ministry of Education's plan to develop locally produced CEFR-aligned textbooks. Hence, the teachers should be informed of the government's plan to use the local version of CEFR-aligned textbooks in the future. Teachers in Thailand were placed in a similar situation when they admitted that they were not aware of their government's plan to develop a local version of CEFR (Franz & Teo, 2017). Despite this, the teachers still use the textbooks in the classroom to assist in the implementation of CEFR. This concurs with another study which found that the use of CEFR imported textbooks is highly frequent in the ESL classroom (Chong & Hamidah, 2021).

Teachers' perceptions over the suitability of CEFR-aligned textbooks recommended by the Ministry of Education are vital because they are the subject matter experts. Although the CEFR-aligned textbooks currently being used in schools are published by well-established UK publishers with endorsement and recommendation from Cambridge English, the content of these imported CEFR textbooks might be too unfamiliar to the students. This may lead the teachers to believe that locally developed CEFR-aligned textbooks are more suitable and serve a better option for both the teachers and students. The findings show that the content of the textbooks, which emphasizes Western context, does not fit well with the students. Similar studies conducted by Rahim and Daghigh (2019) also highlight that Pulse 2 textbooks, currently used in Lower Secondary 1 and 2, completely exclude content related to Malaysian culture. These textbooks focus solely on foreign culture, offering no local cultural content. This issue could be

even more pronounced for students from rural areas who may have very little knowledge of and limited access to the internet to become familiar with the Western context. Not only will they face the difficulty of learning English as a second language, they will also probably struggle to make sense of textbook contents that are too unfamiliar to them. Studies by Nguyen and Hamid (2015) and Yuksel and Demiral (2013) on the utilization of imported CEFR-aligned resource books in Vietnam and Turkey support the findings of this study.

Moreover, the teachers confirm the findings of this study when they agree that the present textbooks should not be abolished because they can be utilized alongside the newly developed English syllabus, which is CEFR-aligned. This suggests that the time consuming and rigorous process of developing a local CEFR-aligned textbooks does not necessarily have to start from scratch. Instead, reviewing and modifying the content of the present textbooks to suit the new CEFR-aligned English syllabus would be more feasible. The teachers' responses indicate their trust in the local CEFR experts to develop Malaysian-made CEFR-based textbooks, exercise books and other teaching and learning materials that could replace the imported CEFR textbooks and resource books.

Nonetheless, the temporary use of the CEFR-aligned imported textbooks offers great assistance to the teachers and students, as the topics in the books are found to be interesting according to the teachers. This shows that the imported CEFR textbooks are properly aligned with the six levels of CEFR and prove that the validation procedure of the alignment of the textbooks conducted by the CEFR council panel has helped the Ministry of Education to purchase good CEFR resource books. This could avoid the mistake that the government of Vietnam faced when they purchased German-authored CEFR-aligned textbooks that were not aligned with CEFR target levels (Nguyen & Hamid, 2015). As a result, they had to deal with resource books that claimed to be CEFR-aligned but which were not, and the content was too Western and unfamiliar to the local context, making it difficult for Vietnamese students.

### **Teachers' Materials Adaption Practices and Techniques**

For many years, Malaysian teachers were not allowed to develop their own teaching materials because they had to adhere strictly

to the textbooks, according to Nurul Ain and Azlina (2019). The teachers seemed comfortable using ready-made teaching materials in the textbooks, so any attempt to change that routine, especially in constructing their own teaching materials, is seen as a burden. Now, they are highly encouraged to do so with the implementation of the CEFR framework and materials adaptation. One cannot deny the fact that materials adaptation means extra workload for the teachers, but at the same time, it also gives them the freedom to design and develop their own teaching materials.

Despite the extra workload, findings also reveal a positive attitude and effort made by the teachers to find and use extra teaching materials other than the ones provided in the textbooks. The teachers simply use McDonough et al. (2013)'s adding techniques by providing extra materials to the students. The utilization of supplementary materials in the learning process, besides textbooks, is deemed effective and creates meaningful learning for learners (Rizaldy, 2017). Indirectly, the process of materials adaptation also helps address the shortcomings of the CEFR-aligned textbooks. The most preferred and commonly used materials adaptation techniques by the teachers are adding, modifying and simplifying. None of them use deleting or reordering when they adapt their teaching materials. The findings corroborate previous studies conducted on rural primary English language teachers by Mohd Iqbal and Muhammad Kamarul (2022) who found that the teachers only employed adding, simplifying, and modifying as their adaptation strategies. The teachers' common practices in materials adaptation techniques match the framework for materials adaptation by McDonough et al. (2013). Clearly, the teachers' reason for adaption is localization through the process of adding, modifying, and simplifying.

## **CONCLUSION**

CEFR implementation and materials adaptation compel teachers to accept and adjust to change. Materials adaptation also changes the landscape of teaching practices among teachers because it gradually takes away teachers' reliance on textbooks. This is in line with the findings of a previous study conducted by Larenas et al. (2015) who found that many teachers depend on textbooks in the teaching process.

In conclusion, the results of this study have proven that the imported CEFR textbooks are suitable to be used temporarily while waiting for local experts to produce Malaysian CEFR-aligned textbooks. The use of British CEFR textbooks permanently could cause more disadvantages than advantages because the teachers are consistently required to adapt teaching materials that best suit their students. Extra workload, unnecessary stress, and pressure on the teachers due to the materials adaptation process would slowly and negatively impact teachers' mental health. Textbooks are meant to assist teachers and students in the classroom, but if they ever become a burden, this may be a sign that the textbooks are no longer needed, especially in the era of online learning. It can also be concluded that the materials adaptation techniques by McDonough et al. (2013) are widely used by ESL teachers in Malaysia when it comes to materials adaptation of the imported CEFR textbooks.

The results and findings from this study play a significant role in the implementation process of CEFR in Malaysia. It shall notify the Ministry of Education of the long-term effects of materials adaptation practice on teachers. Therefore, it would be highly encouraged if the process of developing local CEFR-aligned textbooks could be sped up, thus reducing the extra workload on teachers as soon as possible. Furthermore, the materials adaptation technique shared in this study would benefit other teachers who are probably not aware or uncertain of the process.

On the other hand, further studies on CEFR materials adaptation should be considered, specifically, studies that provide a better understanding of this issue. Some recommendations for future studies include having a larger number of interviewees. Moreover, in-depth interviews could serve as a platform for teachers to share their views, concerns and practices, which could benefit others. Classroom observation is also highly recommended as it will allow future researchers to gather more data from the teachers as well as students' perspectives of CEFR materials adaptation.

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