

## **Framing the English Language (EL) CEFR-informed Curriculum Structure: The UKM Experience**

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### **ABSTRACT**

One of the main concerns that have been raised in the realm of the graduate employability workforce in Malaysia is for graduates to be competent in speaking English. The concern on the graduates' standard in speaking English has been amplified to meet a global standard. It has triggered the Malaysian Ministry of Education to adopt the CEFR benchmark. This paper presents the framework of a CEFR-informed curriculum for Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia (UKM) English Language (EL) courses at UKM and its basis. The paper outlines the method used in framing the curriculum structure based on the ADDIE model. It particularises the curriculum structure into four (4) main implementation phases that address the different proficiency levels in the targeted CEFR levels.

*Keywords:* ADDIE model, CEFR, curriculum design, English language, higher education

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### **INTRODUCTION**

The Roadmap for 2015-2025 in the English Language (EL) Education Reform in Malaysia is an important declaration of the nation's aim to improve the students' proficiency in the EL substantially. This roadmap formalises the Ministry of Education's (MoE) ongoing efforts to generate graduates with good command of the EL (Chonghui, 2019). The roadmap is introduced to address a fundamental

problem faced by Malaysian graduates today.

“They have to cope with a rapidly changing and increasingly globalised world and job market which requires them to communicate effectively in English at a much higher level than before. They need to be aware of the wider world in which they are growing up, and they need sufficient support to enable them to achieve the necessary levels of English proficiency” (Don & Abdullah, 2019).

Central to this roadmap is the adoption of the CEFR framework as a point of reference. CEFR is introduced in the Roadmap to relate the English proficiency level of Malaysian graduates with its international relevance. It calls for the review of the existing curriculum in UKM to be framed against CEFR taking into consideration the Malaysian English Language Education Reform Roadmap 2015-2025.

For these graduates to be marketable and accepted as part of a global workforce, one of the important attributes required is communicating competently in the second language, i.e., English. It is thus central that the Malaysian graduates equip themselves with the required competence and readiness to face the demands of the global workforce. In light of this, the need to ensure graduates' competence in speaking English is intensified. The goal of English Language (EL) education at the university is to prepare graduates with the adequate English Language skills and competencies.

Studies carried out in Malaysia indicate that competency in English is a substantial factor in graduate employment. Ahmad and Zainol (2011) reported that proficiency in EL is one of the requirements for managerial posts in five-star hotels, for instance. In a market research on 295 Malaysian employers by Zubairi et al. (2011), they reported that 80% of the respondents agreed that competence in English is equally or more important than content knowledge or professional skills. This confirms the need to focus on enhancing graduates' English communication skills and competencies besides enriching their content knowledge.

The Malaysian employers, in general, perceive that the universities have not, to a certain extent, provided ample opportunities for students to develop abilities critical to the labour market. They elaborate that low proficiency in the EL and the lack of soft skills, including creativity, communication and critical thinking, are among the reasons fresh graduates lack the readiness to enter the workforce (NST Education, 2019).

In a related study, Pandian and Balraj (2013) examined final year students' readiness to enter the global workplace in the digital age. The study's findings showed that students have difficulties speaking, reading, and writing fluently in English. These weaknesses will hinder the students' professional development in their future careers, especially if they cannot participate in the English language dominated marketplace such as in international affairs and in business communication worldwide.

To conclude, these ongoing discussions on graduates' workplace competency suggest that Malaysian graduates generally require specific language training to equip themselves with expected workplace competency.

One of the aims in the EL roadmap is to adopt a CEFR approach to achieve a level of competency of international standards. The introduction of the CEFR framework into the Malaysian Education Blueprint aimed to develop student's English language competency to be at par with global competency. Several studies investigated the challenges in implementing a CEFR-aligned curriculum in Malaysia (Uri & Aziz, 2018, Darmi et al., 2018; Sidhu et al., 2018). They revealed that Malaysians have a limited understanding of the framework to adopt the fundamental shift into the CEFR. It may largely be due to educators having limited knowledge and a lack of exposure to the CEFR.

In light of all these, there is the need to benchmark the standard of the EL courses at the tertiary level of education with the Common European Framework of Reference before the students enter the workforce. Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia (UKM) believes that framing the EL courses against the CEFR framework would help produce graduates with good mastery and competency in using English. In designing the curriculum, it is important to coordinate the implementation phases by, for instance, considering several factors that include the university's aspiration mainly to generate UKM graduates who have attained

employability readiness in the real working world in the local and international arena.

As such, Arslan and Özenici (2017), in their study, had proposed a possible EFL curriculum design in line with the principles on the CEFR (Common European Framework of Reference for Languages) for tertiary education level. In addition, they had posed several elements to be considered in designing and developing key components of a CEFR-based EFL curriculum. These elements included the development of four language skills in order for language learners to be able to communicate, the consistency of content for learning and teaching EFL skills with real-life situations, the employment of communicative language teaching methods, strategies, and techniques, and the use of alternative testing and assessment.

### **Statement of the Problem**

The impetus for this curriculum review is the pressing concerns on the need to produce graduates with English language competence meets the international standards. Abdullah et al. (2015) pose that the common issue among graduates is that they do not meet the level of English language competence required by potential employers. This apprehension led to the EL reform Roadmap 2015–2025 for the Malaysian universities to implement a CEFR aligned curriculum for English language education. As such, the language competency unit at UKM had embarked on this curriculum change by reframing the existing EL curriculum structure to be aligned to the CEFR.

A more pressing need for this curriculum change is based on the outcome of the university's oral performance assessment. Hazita et al. (2018) designed to evaluate students' oral competency before they graduate from the university. The results of the performance evaluation indicated that most of the students did not attain the targeted CEFR level of C1 (proficient users) as stipulated in the Malaysian EL Roadmap. The English language proficiency courses aim for the undergraduates, who are beginner, elementary and intermediate users of English to attain a higher proficiency level by at least one band at the end of their studies. This target has not been achieved for the two consecutive years as indicated in the results of the Competency Based English Test (CBET) conducted at the university. This is based on the 'UKM CBET' report findings for the first two consecutive years (Hazita et al., 2018). The report states that almost 70 % of the test takers are at CEFR B1 level which is categorised as lower independent users. This calls for a revision of the English language curriculum to address this issue to improve students' language competency. These two factors significantly emphasise the need for a curriculum review of the EL courses offered at UKM.

### **The English Language Education Reform: The Roadmap 2015-2025'**

The Roadmap is a comprehensive and holistic plan that emphasises the skills and abilities required by the students to become independent users of the EL (Yusof,

2015, p. ix). The Roadmap is a timetabled implementation plan for the systemic reform of EL education in Malaysia. It aims to transform the existing EL education system from preschool to tertiary level education and teacher education (Don & Abdullah, 2019).

### **Studies on the Policies and Implementation of CEFR in Malaysia**

Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR) for languages was established in 2001 by the Council of Europe to provide a common basis for elaborating language syllabuses, curriculum guidelines, examinations, and textbooks for countries in Europe (Council of Europe, 2017). It is not exclusively tailored to one specific language. Rather, it is a framework that can easily be adapted to teaching and learning any specific language. Its main objectives are to promote plurilingualism in the European context of its multitude of languages and cultures.

In Malaysia, Uri and Aziz (2018) carried out a study on teachers and the Ministry of Education officials' views on the adopted approach of CEFR onto the Form 5 (Upper school Secondary level) English syllabus and assessment. The study showed that, in general, the teachers were positive to adopt the CEFR framework and the English Language Roadmap in their school curriculum. They agreed that there is a need to improve the English proficiency of the students in order to be at par at the global level. However, most of the teachers also expressed that they were not ready

to adopt the CEFR framework in their teaching despite having attended the CEFR familiarisation workshops and other CEFR related training; the initial moves taken by the ministry.

The UKM initiative in reviewing and redesigning the English curriculum has primarily identified several reasons contributing to implementing CEFR in Malaysia. Bearing in mind the ‘vagueness’ that many language teachers similarly may have regarding the implementation of CEFR, the need to ‘familiarise’ the teachers with the CEFR framework was a priority. No doubt, the main challenge in the Malaysian context is the ability of the council and Ministry of Education to produce resources locally according to the local contexts since CEFR is rather ‘new’ in Malaysia. Teachers’ limited knowledge, lack of adequate training and a low level of awareness about CEFR may also hinder the implementation of the CEFR process. It is also worth to note that several teacher elements such as the teachers’ English proficiency, resistance, and lacking CEFR expertise to construct and produce local CEFR aligned textbooks can add to the challenges in the implementation.

Since the EL Education Reform in Malaysia 2015-2025 was launched, the ministry has made it compulsory for all EL teachers in universities to undergo its CEFR familiarisation training. Therefore, Darmi et al. (2017) carried out a study to understand EL teachers’ views on the EL proficiency courses in a local university in Malaysia. This study examined teachers’ views on students’ performance in the

existing EL courses based on the global CEFR descriptors. The study found that most of the students did not achieve a clear understanding of a variety of texts in particular. Furthermore, the study revealed that although students were not able to write clearly on different topics, in terms of communicative ability, they were, however, capable to communicate fluently and spontaneously to provide a clear explanation on specific areas of concern.

On another note, Sidhu et al. (2018) investigated the implementation of the CEFR-aligned school-based assessment in primary ESL classrooms in five schools located in Damansara, Malaysia. Their study revealed that the implementation of school-based assessment left much to be desired and was far from formative assessment. Though teachers expressed rather positive opinions on the assessment, they lacked the full understanding of the method and admitted possessing limited knowledge of the revised CEFR-aligned ESL curriculum. In addition, the UKM initiative had identified two areas of concern regarding the students’ proficiency profiling. First, students of the lower proficiency and the intermediate proficiency levels based on the CBET results indicate the lack of ability to attain the mastery or satisfactory level (Hazita et al., 2018). Second, other than in speaking, students are also found to have the lack of ability to understand the main ideas of complex texts based on teachers’ feedback that their students were less able to produce clear and detailed texts.

## METHODOLOGY

In developing a new structure for an English Language CEFR-informed curriculum, UKM adopts the ADDIE model (Morrison, 2010). The term ADDIE is an acronym for Analyze, Design, Develop, Implement, and Evaluate, phases of the instructional design process. Each phase reflects the important components in the process of instructional design.

The model is most commonly used in instructional design to create "instructional" experiences that make knowledge acquisition more efficient and effective (Aldoobie, 2015; Drljaca et al., 2017; Hsu et al., 2014). It offers a systematic approach in curriculum design and implementation, which can be applied to different contexts of study and modes of instruction—be it face to face or online—and duration of instruction (Aldoobie, 2015; Razali & Shahbodin, 2015; Zhang, 2020). Despite being highly structured, this model allows flexibility in implementing the processes (Balanyk, 2017). The flexible and systematic characteristics of the model became the main reason for UKM to use ADDIE as a guiding framework in developing the new English Language CEFR-informed curriculum.

### **Developing CEFR-informed Curriculum using the ADDIE Model**

The ADDIE model framework categorises five steps of the instructional design process (Dick et al., 2011; Gustafson & Branch, 2011). This model postulates a 5-step process in curriculum design, consisting

of the Analysis stage, followed by Design, Develop, Implement and Evaluate. Hsu et al. (2014) used this model to develop and evaluate an online continuing education curriculum for a hospital in Taiwan. The study found that the model is useful and practical for course development projects as it helps describe what happens and prescribes what needs to happen (Hsu et al., 2014). Drljaca et al. (2017) used the ADDIE model to prepare the teaching materials for online courses. The study detailed the five stages suggested by the model and emphasised the iterative process of each stage. Zhang (2020) implemented the ADDIE Model in developing a college online English learning community to improve the effective interaction between teachers and learners, learners and learners and teachers and teachers. By applying the model in the development of the community, Zhang states that the five stages of this model are interconnected and are to be used as a non-linear cyclic mode (Zhang, 2020). These characteristics of the model are illustrated in Figure 1.

The application of this model on the development of the new English Language curriculum indicates that each stage comprises processes and goals which require careful and detailed planning as they are interconnected and affect the other stages. These moves are necessary to ensure that the curriculum developers in UKM can produce a sound curriculum for the students. Adapting the ADDIE model, the UKM method in framing the CEFR informed structure is described in Table 1.

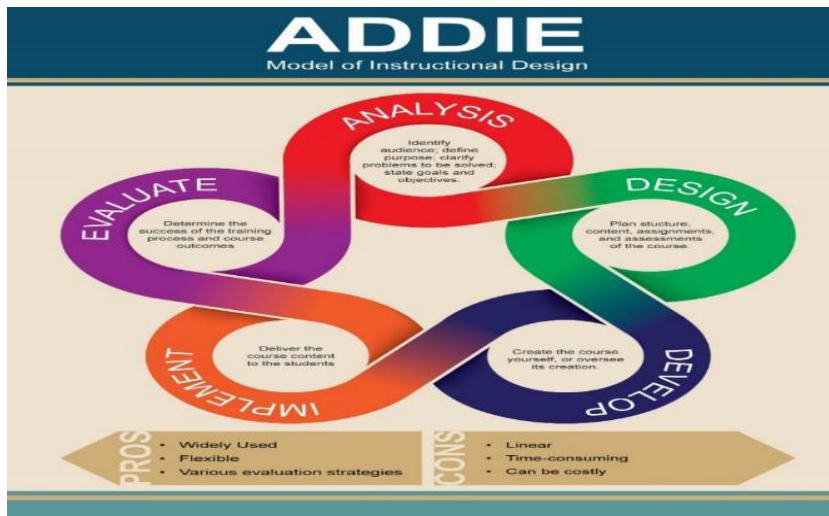


Figure 1. The ADDIE Model

Table 1

*The UKM Method in framing the CEFR informed structure*

Stage	Steps taken	Description	Justification
Analysis	Distribution of student questionnaires on perceptions towards the existing courses.	This questionnaire comprises items on teaching and learning processes, language skills, course materials, and assessments.	To identify student's perceptions of the courses offered, their preferences and their needs on language.
	Discussion on Teacher feedback on the courses.	Similar items in the student questionnaire were discussed.	To identify teachers' best practices, challenges in teaching the courses, feedback on course improvement.
	Discussion with faculties.	Discussions include the language skills needed by students in their academic lives and the workplace.	To identify the language needs of students from the different faculties.

Table 1 (Continued)

Stage	Steps taken	Description	Justification
Design	Setting up a curriculum task force to plan the new structure.	Comprising language instructors.	To develop the EL curriculum and to plan for implementation stages.
	Setting up committees for the English Language courses.	New courses were introduced in the new structure.	To design courses.
	The implementation of the design stage.	A series of training workshops on CEFR Familiarization and Constructive Alignment.	To provide instructors with the input for them to design the new courses.
Development	Preparation of the course information; <i>proforma</i>	To be submitted to the Centre for Learning Accreditation UKM	To be reviewed and approved.
	Mapping the curriculum structure.	Comparison of <i>proforma</i> across courses.	To ensure alignment of learning outcomes.
	Presentation of the proposed curriculum structure.	To the board of English Language Enhancement Programme Initiatives (the committee members of " <i>Iniatif Pengukuhan Bahasa Inggeris</i> ")	To obtain feedback on the new CEFR informed curriculum structure.
	Development of course materials, evaluation tasks and assessment scales.	Based on the CEFR Book of New Descriptors.	To design course materials, evaluation tasks and assessments based on feedback.
	Submission for Senate Approval	Presentation to University Senate for approval	To obtain Senate approval
	New CEFR Curriculum Roadshow.	Presentation to faculties	To inform the faculties on the new CEFR informed curriculum structure.



Table 1 (Continued)

Stage	Steps taken	Description	Justification
Implementation	The commencement of the new EL structure in the new Academic session.	UKM 2019/2020 Academic Session.	To implement the new CEFR informed curriculum structure
Evaluation	Internal Audit: at the end of the semester.	1. Student and teacher feedback surveys. 2. Feedback on students' performance based on students' end of the semester grade.	To gain students' and teachers' perspectives and performance on the courses.
	External Audit: from stakeholders and industries	Presentations in seminars and conferences	To gain feedback from industries on the relevance of the courses to the workplace

### **THE NEW UKM CEFR-INFORMED ENGLISH LANGUAGE (EL) CURRICULUM**

In the effort for English Language (EL) education to meet the standards and benchmarks stipulated in the CEFR, UKM designed a new “CEFR-informed” EL curriculum structure. This structure is designed to situate CEFR into the existing curriculum taking into consideration four crucial facets, which are:

- i. the former EL curriculum structure
- ii. UKM students' language proficiency at the point of entry into the university
- iii. the policies on EL credit requirements as stipulated by the Ministry of Higher Education (MOHE) and the university
- iv. the principles and benchmarks of the CEFR

Following the national requirement for the public universities in Malaysia to offer five credits in a total of English courses to be taken, UKM offers the students a 2 +2 + 1 credit of English courses to be taken throughout their studies in the university. Forty notional hours are allocated for each EL credit. It makes a total of two hundred learning hours for each track to justify the number of hours needed for a student to improve their proficiency to the next upper band level. These courses are spread throughout their studies, from Year 1 to Year 3, to provide students with the EL continuous learning experience before starting their industrial training and practical sessions.

#### **The Needs Analysis**

At the initial stage of the new curriculum design, a survey was conducted with the

students and 30 language instructors to gain feedback on the language courses. This survey was emailed to all students who took the English language courses. A total of 801 (44.5%) undergraduate students responded to the survey.

The Likert-scale survey was divided into several sections; students' perception of language skills learnt in the course, soft skills acquired, course materials used and suitability of the course assessment. The same questions were given to the language instructors in open-ended questionnaires to gather more qualitative responses from the teachers. This feedback provides a needs analysis on the strengths and weaknesses as the basis in designing the current curriculum. The overall results indicated that students preferred courses to enhance their oral communication skills and confidence-building. In addition, the instructors' feedback indicates more emphasis on the required communication skills for students to function in academic and workplace settings.

These two findings relate to the call from the MOHE to promote a higher level of EL communication competencies amongst

university students. It is aimed to prepare the graduates to be compatible with the global challenges and competitive job markets. With this vision, UKM highlights the concern to ensure that the level of language competency taught in the university meets international standards. The CEFR benchmark is used as a guiding tool in the new EL curriculum design for UKM. The CEFR's principles on focusing on the real-time communication needs of the learners provide the impetus for the design of courses in the new curriculum. The CEFR Global Scale is also used as a point of reference for describing the students' existing and targeted proficiency levels.

UKM embedded courses are interactive and integrated into nature, focusing on enhancing the students' communication skills applicable in real-life contexts in the new curriculum. The curriculum is then designed to focus on these two main pillars; i) Academia English (in comparison to Academic English) and ii) Workplace Communication English with 'speaking' as the core emphasis of each course module. The new curriculum structure is depicted in Table 2.

Table 2  
*The UKM CEFR-Informed Curriculum Structure*

MUET Band	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Target
1 & 2	<i>Breakthrough English</i> CEFR A2	<i>Academic Interactions</i> CEFR B1-B2	<i>Let's Get Talking</i> CEFR B2	A2 to B2
	<i>Bridging English</i> CEFR A2-B1			

Table 2 (Continued)

MUET Band	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Target
3	<i>Academic Interactions</i> CEFR B1-B2	<i>Pro-Talk English</i> CEFR B1-B2	<i>Corporate Storytelling</i> CEFR B2	B1 to B2
4	<i>Academic Literacy</i> CEFR B2	<i>Speak to Persuade</i> CEFR B2-C1	<i>Professional Communication</i> CEFR C1	B2 to C1
5 & 6	<i>Page to Stage</i> CEFR C1-C2	<i>Advanced Communication Project</i> CEFR C2		C2

There seems to be an intersection of targeted CEFR levels in certain courses and tracks from the general perspective. Although the CEFR levels indicated are the same, the courses use different sets of tasks, activities and assessments. Even though the CEFR levels targeted for each course seem to intersect, the courses are designed to develop communicative competencies. The intersecting CEFR levels between courses in the same track are intentional. The progress is made visible at the 1) assessment scales, 2) course objectives, and 3) materials used.

### The Malaysian University English Test (MUET)

The new curriculum takes into account students' level of EL proficiency upon entering the university. The Malaysian University English Test (MUET) bands have become a benchmark for designing the package of courses offered. Based on the students' MUET results, the students of the same proficiency levels are placed into

respective phases. Each phase will offer the students the EL courses that suit their levels of proficiency and existing abilities. In determining the parallelism of competencies between MUET bands and CEFR levels, the benchmarking matrix of MUET results, CEFR and major EL competency tests are referred to. The matrix is as stated in Table 3.

The student database shows that the majority of the students entered the university with MUET Bands 3 to 5. The university also takes in several students with a MUET Band 2 level. There is also a small number of students in the range of Bands 5 and 6. Observations from the EL instructors and the scores obtained in oral tasks in the existing courses indicate that the students' oral competencies require substantial improvement compared to reading and writing. In framing the new EL curriculum, adaptations to the mapping guide were made based on these reasons:

Table 3

*Mapping of MUET Results against CEFR, IELTS, and TOEFL (Malaysian Examination Syndicate, 2018)*

MUET (Malaysian University English Test)			CEFR	IELTS (International English Language Testing System)	TOEFL (Test of English as a Foreign Language)	English Level
Range score	Average score	Band	Band	Band	Band	Proficiency
260-300	264.39	6	C2	>8.0	110-120	Advanced
220-259	232.90	5	C1	7.0-8.0	94-109	
180-219	202.60	4	B2	6.0-6.5	60-93	Upper intermediate
140-179	163.40	3		5.5	46-59	
100-139	125.90	2	B1	4.0-5.0	31-45	Lower Intermediate
<100		1	A2	<4.0	<30	Elementary

1. The Band 5 and 6 students are grouped as they are closely described as proficient and independent users of English in the CEFR Global Scale. They are to aim further to reach higher CEFR levels of English competencies.
2. The Band 4 students are considered independent users of English, and the curriculum aims to enhance their oral competencies further;
3. The Band 3 students need more effort and scaffolding to increase their oral competencies and confidence in using the language.
4. Those students below Band 3 require extra formal learning hours to be closely guided to build their confidence in oral competencies mainly.

Table 4

*The Adaptation of Mapping Between MUET Results and CEFR Levels*

MUET results	CEFR levels range based on oral competencies	English proficiency level
Band 6	B2–C1	Advanced
Band 5		
Band 4	B1–B2	Lower Intermediate to Upper Intermediate
Band 3	B1	Lower Intermediate

Table 4 (Continued)

MUET results	CEFR levels range based on oral competencies	English proficiency level
Band 2	A2–B1	Elementary to Lower Intermediate
Band 1		

Table 4 illustrates the adaptation of the mapping of MUET results against CEFR based on students’ oral competencies:

Four pathway tracks are designed using this mapping as a guide. In each track, a series of courses are pitched at either mastery level or one level higher. In line with the aspirations of the Malaysian EL Roadmap 2015-2025 (Don et al., 2015),

students can show incremental improvement and complete the tracks. Each track offers continuous progress of learning outcomes, tasks and assessments based on the CEFR descriptors (the ‘can do’ statements) to facilitate language acquisition and learning. This gradual progress is illustrated in Table 5.

Table 5

*The UKM EL Curriculum Tracks*

Track I	Track II	Track III	Track IV
Low Proficiency A2	Lower Intermediate Proficiency B1	Intermediate Proficiency B2	High Proficiency
MUET Band 1 & 2	MUET Band 3	MUET Band 4	MUET Band 5 & 6

**Implementation Phase for Low Proficiency Level Track I**

This track represents the courses that are offered to students with MUET Bands lower than 3. These bands are equivalent

to the CEFR range of A2 (basic user) to B1 (intermediate user) English. Table 6 illustrates the courses that are offered in Track I.

Table 6

*Low Proficiency Level Track I*

Low Proficiency Level Track I				
Course code and name	LMCE1042 <i>Breakthrough English</i>	LMCE1052 <i>Bridging English</i>	LMCE1062 <i>Academic Interactions</i>	LMCE 3051 <i>Let's Get Talking</i>
CEFR Level	A2	A2–B1	B1–B2	B2
Credit Hour	2	2	2	1

Source. Citra UKM (2019)

In this track, students have an additional two credit hours as compared to the other three tracks. The first two courses offered in this track are designed as introductory courses and expose students to university academic culture. Students begin their first year taking *Breakthrough English* in the first semester, a foundation level course that aims to enhance their competencies on vocabulary and language structures used in familiar and basic situations to build their confidence in using the language specifically. In line with the CEFR principle of empowering learners in using the language, this course allows students to attain a basic mastery of English. The learning outcome (LO) of this course is for students to communicate and interact with confidence on familiar topics that encompass receptive, production and mediation skills. It addresses the concerns raised regarding the common issue of the lack of confidence in using English among many university graduates in Malaysia.

The following course, *Bridging English*, is pitched at a high CEFR A2 that intersects with a lower CEFR B1. This course bridges basic English and using English in an academic setting. This course offers classroom tasks where students engage in writing and basic research tasks focusing

on reading comprehension to establish their academic learning styles.

*Academic Interactions* is designed to assist students in engaging with EL texts, continuing the skills emphasised in *Bridging English*. It aims towards students achieving at least a high CEFR B1 to lower CEFR B2 at the end of the course. The classroom tasks are designed to enhance students' receptive skills of reading and interacting with texts, emphasising the production skills of communicating and collaborating in group discussions.

The students' last course in this track is *Let's Get Talking*, a communication course that prepares students to communicate more competently in English before they attend their internship training in Year 3 onwards. This course is pitched at CEFR B2 level. It consolidates the skills acquired in the earlier courses and allow students to perform communicative tasks in multiple authentic contexts.

### Implementation Phase for Lower Intermediate Level Track II

Track II offers EL courses designed for students who obtained MUET Band 3, as summarised in Table 7.

Table 7

*Lower Intermediate Level Track II*

Lower Intermediate Level Track II			
Course code and name	LMCE1062 <i>Academic Interactions</i>	LMCE2082 <i>Pro-Talk English</i>	LMCE3071 <i>Corporate Storytelling</i>
CEFR Level	B1–B2	B1–B2	B2
Credit Hour	2	2	1

Source. Citra UKM (2019)

The first course in this track is *Academic Interactions*, is the same course offered at the end of Low Proficiency Level Track I. It indicates the intersect between Track I and II. Following *Academic Interactions*, students proceed to *Pro-Talk English* (an abbreviation for *Professional Talk in English*) which is pitched at CEFR B1 level to prepare students for workplace communication. This course focuses on the workplace communication genre, further enhancing the skills acquired in the previous course. Students write emails, conduct meetings and pitch ideas in given workplace simulations. These are in line with the concerns raised on graduates' lack of workplace communicative abilities by industries.

*Corporate Storytelling* introduces students to the current trend of corporations informing the public about their products and values. It is pitched at CEFR B2, where students' communicative skills are reinforced in for public viewing group discussions and oral presentations. In addition, it will allow students to use a wider selection of word choices in their ability to review and present.

**Implementation Phase for Intermediate Proficiency Level Track III**

Track III comprises courses for students who obtained MUET Band 4 or those in a high CEFR B1 level and low CEFR B2 levels of proficiency, as illustrated in Table 8.

Table 8

*Intermediate Level Track III*

Intermediate Level Track III			
Course code and name	LMCE 1072 <i>Academic Literacy</i>	LMCE 2092 <i>Speak to Persuade</i>	LMCE 3071 <i>Professional Communication</i>
CEFR Level	CEFR B2	CEFR B2-C1	CEFR C1
Credit Hour	2	2	1

Source. Citra UKM (2019)

The first English course, *Academic Literacy*, aims to equip students with the language to function in the academic setting and become independent English users (CEFR B2 level). This course requires students to analyse multiple forms of texts used in their different fields of study, focusing on mediation class activities and assessments. Students are expected to

engage with texts critically, analytically selecting and using the information in forum discussions as their classroom activities and assessments. These activities reflect the tasks commonly used in the students' faculties, and the students can transfer the language and skills when dealing with other content courses. In addition, these tasks are designed to empower students as agents

of learning, where they take charge of the selection and analysis of texts, a principle strongly emphasised in CEFR.

In the students' second year of study, they proceed to *Speak to Persuade*, a public speaking course. This course targets students to achieve a high CEFR B2 level and move towards being proficient users of the language (CEFR C1). The course aims to empower students' confidence level in communicating a persuasive speech. This task is highly relevant, not just for academic purposes in the university but also in the workplace and other contexts. Students are given the responsibility to chart and mediate the speaking tasks, from selecting topics, researching information, and constructing the meanings in their speeches. These activities allow for creative and transactional language use, as suggested by CEFR, as the students use information in persuading the audience through their speeches.

In *Professional Communication*, students are exposed to the language and tasks that reflect the workplace contexts

to prepare them for industrial training, internships and communication with people outside the campus. The focal point of the course is for students to apply the language and knowledge learned in the previous courses in a video production task. To complete this assessment task, students collaborate to uncover workplace issues and scenarios and produce videos to raise awareness. These activities should allow students to use analytical discourse in the video production process.

### Implementation Phase for Upper Intermediate Level Track IV

The courses in Track IV are designed for students with MUET Bands 5 and 6 to enhance students' ability to communicate competently in any given situation. In addition, the activities in these courses allow the students to showcase their competence at CEFR C1 level and beyond. Table 9 details the list of courses under Upper Intermediate Level Track IV:

Table 9

*Upper-Intermediate Level Track IV*

Upper Intermediate Level Track IV		
Course code and name	LMCE 1082 <i>Page to Stage</i>	LMCE 2013 <i>Advanced Communication Project</i>
CEFR Level	C1–C2	C2
Credit Hour	2	2

Source. Citra UKM (2019)

In *Page to Stage*, students experiment with the nuances of EL in pronunciation,

intonation and language patterns through reading a novel and portraying a character



through a play using literature. The course combines literature appreciation and interpretations into a stage play. An *Advanced Communication Project* course follows it. Students identify a project where they are expected to write a project proposal, a progress report and display their EL presentation skills in front of a large audience beyond the classroom walls. Students are encouraged to participate in any existing project within the faculties and campus. The track enhances students' appreciation and awareness of the language. It also opens the opportunity for a wider range of language use and knowledge transfer.

This curriculum structure is designed to integrate the CEFR elements in the Malaysian EL curriculum to align with the international standards outlined by the Malaysian EL Roadmap (Don et al., 2015). Therefore, it is significant to produce a Malaysian workforce to perform and to compete at global platforms.

## CONCLUSION

UKM adopted the ADDIE model (Morrison, 2010) in restructuring its new English Language CEFR-informed curriculum. The primary objective of this curriculum is to elevate students' confidence in using English in various given contexts regardless of their levels of proficiency upon entry to the university. There were several immediate challenges faced when the curriculum was rolled out for the two semesters. One of the challenges faced during the curriculum implementation was the monitoring of

each course in each track. It was crucial to ensure that all instructors embraced the understanding of the new CEFR-informed curriculum. It is acknowledged that this is a gradual process to get the 'buy in' from the instructors to adopt CEFR in the delivery of their courses. The continual monitoring of the courses during the implementation phases of the curriculum enables the significant "hiccups" to be addressed immediately. In moving forward to strengthen the curriculum, UKM will initiate an ongoing review of each course towards CEFR—aligned tasks and activities to achieve the course objectives. The results from the ongoing reviews can be used to remap the materials and assessment scores to represent "true" CEFR can-do statements. This exercise is a crucial process to the next evaluation of the curriculum involving stakeholders from the industry. This exercise in framing the new EL in UKM within the CEFR is part of producing world-class graduates. It is framed based on the Malaysian EL teaching and learning experience. In the long run, this can be a 'mould' of reference for a Malaysian CEFR informed curriculum for tertiary education.

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