

EVALUATING STUDENTS' VIEWS ON THE IMPORTANCE AND USEFULNESS OF CEFR IN SPEAKING TEST

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ABSTRACT

The Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) is crucial for speaking tests as it provides a standardised framework to assess and gauge language proficiency accurately and consistently. This research evaluates ESL students' awareness and perceived usefulness of the CEFR in group discussions. Data were obtained from 105 diploma students from UiTM Sarawak and UiTM Alor Gajah using an online questionnaire. The results indicate a moderate level of CEFR awareness, although opinions on its impact and role in language assessment and goal setting were varied. Respondents generally view CEFR-aligned speaking tests positively, showing a favourable perception of its usefulness. However, some have expressed concerns that these tests could be potential obstacles in their efforts to improve their language skills. The study highlighted the need for further education and training on CEFR-aligned assessments to enhance students' comprehension and confidence in language proficiency development. It also emphasises the importance of designing assessments that help learners overcome potential barriers to improving language proficiency.

Keywords: CEFR; speaking test; group discussion; ESL teaching and learning

Introduction

In today's interconnected global landscape, effective communication skills have never been more essential, particularly within the realm of tertiary education. Discussion skills, especially in language learning programmes, are of paramount importance, aiming to cultivate students' capacity to engage in meaningful conversations. Proficiency in effective discussion not only enriches comprehension of course material but also hones critical thinking, active listening, and empathy. For many English as a Second Language (ESL) students, communication remains a persistent barrier, extending beyond their academic journey into the professional realm, where English communication skills are indispensable for global employability (Awang & Kasuma, 2008).

The CEFR has emerged as a pivotal tool in language education, offering a standardised and comprehensive means to evaluate language proficiency. Developed by the Council of Europe (2001), the CEFR furnishes a detailed framework for assessing and characterising language proficiency across various skills and levels. Since its inception, the CEFR has been widely embraced by educational institutions, language testing organisations, and language professionals across the globe (Brunfaut & Harding, 2020; Zaki & Darmi, 2021). Nevertheless, limited attention has been directed towards gauging university and diploma students' awareness and perceived utility of the CEFR guidelines, especially in the context of speaking test discussions. Self-assessment has the potential to empower students and enhance language proficiency when they are familiar with and independently apply the CEFR framework. However, there is a noticeable gap in research when it comes to understanding the importance and usefulness of CEFR in speaking tests from the students' perspectives. Assessing ESL students' awareness of CEFR-aligned speaking tests in group discussions and gauging their perceived usefulness of these tests will contribute significantly to a more comprehensive understanding of how CEFR influences students' language learning experiences and assessments.

Thus, this study examines diploma students' awareness of the CEFR and their perspectives on the applicability of its guidelines during speaking test discussions. The objectives are to:

- (1) evaluate the extent of awareness among ESL students regarding CEFR-aligned speaking tests in the context of group discussions; and
- (2) measure the perceived usefulness of CEFR-aligned speaking tests in group discussion as perceived by ESL students.

Literature Review

Implementing the CEFR in Language Education

The CEFR was created to establish a common language for effective communication in educational settings among Council of Europe member states (Council of Europe, 2001). Its primary goal is to enhance language education by emphasising reflection, communication, and networking within educational settings (Council of Europe, 2001; Göksu, 2015). The CEFR identifies five communication competencies: listening,

reading, spoken interaction, spoken production, and writing (Darmi et al., 2017). It also outlines six progressively advanced proficiency levels: Breakthrough (A1), Waystage (A2), Threshold (B1), Vantage (B2), Effective Operational Proficiency (C1), and Mastery (C2) (Council of Europe, 2001).

However, its influence has since expanded globally, extending beyond Europe to USA, South America, Asia, and the Asia-Pacific region. The evolution of the CEFR has resulted in its versatile application across various contexts, including curriculum development, syllabus design, instructional material creation, and the establishment of robust assessment systems (Jones et al., 2016).

Recently, adapted versions of the CEFR framework have been adopted as proficiency standards by English educators and learners in countries like Thailand, Japan, Vietnam, Malaysia, and China (Jones et al., 2016). Particularly, non-English-speaking nations appreciate the CEFR's inherent openness, adaptability, and flexibility, which facilitate effective English language acquisition. In Malaysia, the Ministry of Education (MOE) incorporated the CEFR into the Malaysian Education Blueprint (MEB) for 2013-2025. This recent incorporation of the CEFR into the Malaysian Education Blueprint emphasises the nation's commitment to enhancing English language standards (Jones et al., 2016).

As such, the call for research intensifies, urging an exploration of university students' speaking abilities within the CEFR framework, particularly in institutions where English is the medium of instruction (Razali & Latif, 2019). The emphasis on speaking as a crucial element of communication, as highlighted by Darmi et al. (2017), aligns with the revealed challenges Malaysian students face in speaking English proficiently, particularly in speaking assessments (Asdar, 2017).

Perception and Understanding of CEFR in Language Learning

The initiation of the CEFR in Malaysia since 2013 aimed at aligning the English language education system with CEFR standards, seeking to elevate the quality of English language education to an international level. Subsequent research primarily focused on teachers' familiarity with and adoption of the CEFR, with less emphasis on students' awareness of their CEFR results.

A study conducted by Darmi et al. (2017), involving 25 Malaysian English teachers, examined their perspectives on students' performance in English language proficiency courses using CEFR descriptors. The findings revealed varying opinions among teachers across different proficiency courses, suggesting that the CEFR standards aimed at university students were not consistently met.

Uri (2023) highlighted a challenge faced by teachers in Malaysia regarding the adoption of CEFR. Even after attending training courses on CEFR, some teachers remained unclear and uncertain about implementing the CEFR, indicating a lack of understanding of the framework. Similar results were obtained by Nawai and Said (2020) who studied primary school teachers' attitudes toward the CEFR and Uri and Abd Aziz (2018). Both studies found that teachers had problems comprehending the purpose of using the CEFR and were reluctant to incorporate it into their classrooms.

Sidhu et al. (2018) indicated that although teachers generally had positive evaluations of school-based assessments, they lacked a full understanding of the

methodology and had only a basic grasp of the updated CEFR-aligned ESL curriculum. Teachers provided minimal constructive feedback on assignments, and students were not encouraged to reflect on their work. Essential elements like peer and self-assessment, which foster independent learning, were inconsistently applied.

Collectively, these results revealed the limited awareness among teachers regarding the CEFR in Malaysia. This lack of awareness is likely to impact students' understanding of their CEFR scores.

Facilitating Language Learning Through Discussions

Speaking stands as the skill through which students are most frequently evaluated in real-life circumstances, emphasising its practical significance (Brown & Yule, 1983). Bueno et al. (2006) emphasise that speaking is often perceived as one of the most intricate language skills for learners to cultivate, even after years of language learning.

Speaking holds the utmost importance among the four language skills, enabling students to convey emotions, ideas, and knowledge while gaining insights into the perspectives of others. Genç (as cited in Darancik, 2018) associates speaking prowess with communication competence, cultural awareness, and the acquisition of crucial language abilities. It empowers students to communicate effectively, share ideas, and comprehend the world more profoundly.

Research by Darancik (2018) accentuates the critical role of speaking skills in language acquisition. The results reveal that 57.52% of students perceive speaking as the most formidable skill, underscoring the necessity for heightened focus on speaking instruction. Nonetheless, students view speaking as an enduring and impactful skill for attaining proficiency in a foreign language, with 71.5% prioritising its enhancement to augment their overall language aptitude. This finding suggests the importance of prioritising speaking in instruction, as student motivation plays a significant role in successful learning.

Additionally, according to McNaughton (2020), in-depth classroom discussions involving specialised terminology play a substantial role in deepening comprehension and fostering reading skills. Research indicates that extensive discussions aid in better language comprehension, surpassing mere word decoding (García & Cain, 2014, as cited in Hjetland et al., 2017). Proficiency in oral language and the ability to make inferences contribute to heightened reading comprehension (Oakhill & Cain, 2012, as cited in Hjetland et al., 2017). Consequently, the evolving pedagogical approach emphasises intricate discussions to derive meaningful understanding and expedite progress in reading comprehension (McNaughton & Lai, 2012).

Despite the challenges it presents to learners, speaking remains a critical component for effective communication. To assist learners in progressing, it is essential to examine how structured frameworks, such as the CEFR can support the development and assessment of speaking skills.

Perceived Effectiveness of CEFR in Speaking Assessments

Previous research predominantly examined teachers' utilisation of CEFR in language

learning, emphasising their comprehension and proficiency in application. However, it is equally crucial to explore the student perspective on CEFR.

Students should be able to understand their language performance in the CEFR context because the framework categorises language skills, and self-assessment through “can do” statements. Glover (2011) examined the response of university students in Turkey to the Common Reference Levels (CRLs) within the CEFR for self-assessment of speaking skills. A notable finding from the study indicated that students, when well-informed about the CEFR descriptors, experience enhanced proficiency and confidence in speaking. Simultaneously, this knowledge allows students to self-assess their language abilities, thereby improving and making their speaking skills more relevant. With assistance from teachers, students develop self-awareness, enabling them to identify areas for improvement and customise their language learning strategies. As a result, they can articulate their ideas more effectively.

Apart from that, understanding the importance and usefulness of CEFR in speaking tests is crucial for students. It provides a standardised framework for language proficiency, including speaking skills. Students who are familiar with the CEFR can better understand the expectations for different proficiency levels, enabling them to prepare more effectively for speaking tests. Faez et al.'s (2011) study demonstrated that students who were well-informed about the framework in classroom instructions experienced increased motivation, enhanced self-confidence in their learning, and were more inclined to actively use the language.

Methods

Utilising a descriptive quantitative approach, this study analysed data gathered from both UiTM Sarawak and UiTM Melaka to evaluate ESL students' awareness and perceived usefulness of CEFR-aligned descriptors in group discussions. The choice of this research design allowed for a systematic assessment of students' awareness and perceived usefulness, employing objective measurement through numerical data collection. This approach facilitated statistical analysis, enabling the identification of patterns and trends (Black, 1999). Moreover, by surveying a representative sample across multiple campuses, the study ensured generalisability and enabled systematic examination of variations in responses (Black, 1999; Nardi, 2018).

This study included 105 diploma students who participated in an August 2023 webinar discussing the application of CEFR in the Speaking Test for the ELC151 course. The participants were from UiTM Sarawak, specifically from three campuses: UiTM Samarahan, UiTM Samarahan 2, and UiTM Mukah, along with students from UiTM Melaka, Alor Gajah campus. This diverse group represented a cross-section of students. The respondents were primarily first-year second-semester students from various faculties, exhibiting a mix of proficiency levels mainly consisting of CEFR B1, with a minority at CEFR A2 and B2 levels.

ELC151 Integrated Language Skill II is a mandatory language remedial course for first-year second-semester diploma students at UiTM, and focuses on general English. It is a prerequisite course available to those who have passed ELC121 at the B1 CEFR level. The course enhances intensive reading skills and strategies. The course also integrates speaking and listening skills so that it better equips students for

effective communication in both social and academic contexts. ELC151 aims to elevate students from CEFR B2 (low) to CEFR B2 (high) through diverse materials and situations.

At UiTM, the CEFR serves as a standardised framework for evaluating and improving students' language proficiency. This framework is predominantly utilised in language courses to elevate students' proficiency within the specified band. Throughout the course, students advance based on their CEFR levels, with targeted learning objectives and assessments aligned with each proficiency stage.

Instruments

Researchers designed and employed a 5-point Likert-scale questionnaire to gauge students' awareness and perception of the CEFR in speaking test discussions. The questionnaire encompassed three sections: Section 1 for student profiling, Section 2 for CEFR awareness, and Section 3 for CEFR usefulness with Likert-scale ratings ranging from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 5 (Strongly Agree), enabling valuable insights into students' responses and perceptions regarding CEFR.

Prior to its use in the webinar for data collection, the questionnaire underwent a crucial pilot study on the campuses. Consequently, adjustments were made to the questionnaires based on the findings from the pilot study, incorporating relevant items to enhance their overall validity and reliability. For instance, two question items were excluded from the actual questionnaire: "Do you think incorporating the CEFR in language instruction improves the accuracy of language assessment?" and "Do you feel that using the CEFR helps to set clear language learning goals?" These questions were excluded because their focus differed from the main objective of measuring students' awareness of the CEFR framework. They required a deeper understanding of CEFR and its impact on language instruction, which might be beyond the scope of the students' experiences.

The Awareness section included five questions focused on evaluating students' knowledge about CEFR. These questions gauged familiarity with CEFR, experience with CEFR-based speaking tests, knowledge of CEFR descriptors, belief in CEFR's efficacy for language instruction, and perception of CEFR's role in setting language learning goals.

The Usefulness section comprised four questions aimed at evaluating students' perceptions of CEFR's practicality in speaking test discussions. These questions assessed the clarity and helpfulness of CEFR descriptors in identifying strengths and weaknesses, fairness and unbiased nature of CEFR-aligned speaking tests, feedback received based on CEFR descriptors, and potential impact of CEFR-aligned speaking tests on language proficiency. Examining perceptions of Usefulness offers valuable insights into students' views on the relevance and benefit of CEFR alignment in speaking assessments.

In this research, data were collected from 105 diploma students who participated in an August 2023 webinar discussing the application of the CEFR in the Speaking Test for the ELC151 course at UiTM. Informed consent was obtained during the webinar and through Google Form before the data collection.

Results and Discussions

This section presents results on respondents' awareness and perceived usefulness of CEFR in speaking test discussions based on data collected from an online 5-point Likert-scale questionnaire completed by 105 diploma students from UiTM Sarawak and UiTM Alor Gajah.

Extent of Awareness Among ESL Students Regarding CEFR-Aligned Speaking Tests in the Context of Group Discussions

Table 1

Respondents' Level of Agreement Towards CEFR

Item 1	Counts	% of Total
1. Strongly disagree	4	3.8 %
2. Disagree	7	6.7 %
3. Neutral	41	39.0 %
4. Agree	36	34.3 %
5. Strongly agree	17	16.2 %

Table 1 shows that 3.8% expressed strong disagreement, 6.7% disagreed, 39.0% remained neutral, 34.3% agreed, and 16.2% strongly agreed with being informed about CEFR. These results suggest a moderate level of awareness and acquaintance with CEFR among the respondents. However, the notable percentage of neutral responses indicates a lack of firm viewpoints or uncertainty regarding their understanding of CEFR. This could be attributed to insufficient training, limited knowledge, and time constraints faced by educators in comprehending the CEFR framework. Students' lack of comprehension may pose challenges in integrating CEFR into the teaching and learning process, not only in Malaysia but also in other developed countries like Australia and Hong Kong.

The respondents were queried about their prior experiences in taking a speaking test aligned with CEFR standards. Table 2 shows that 1.9% strongly disagreed, 6.7% disagreed, 35.2% maintained a neutral stance, 38.1% agreed, and 18.1% strongly agreed. These results indicate a large portion of respondents were familiar with speaking tests conforming to CEFR standards. However, the neutral responses suggest a degree of uncertainty or a lack of a definitive understanding of the specific nature of these assessments. The results provide empirical evidence to show the lack of awareness regarding the integration of CEFR standards in their speaking tests (Asdar, 2017; Darmi et al., 2017).

Table 2*Respondents' Awareness of Speaking Test Based on CEFR Standard*

Item 2	Counts	% of Total
1. Strongly disagree	2	1.9 %
2. Disagree	7	6.7 %
3. Neutral	37	35.2 %
4. Agree	40	38.1 %
5. Strongly agree	19	18.1 %

Regarding awareness of CEFR descriptors for speaking skills, respondents were asked about their familiarity with the descriptors for various CEFR levels (A1, A2, B1, B2, C1, C2). The results in Table 3 show that 1.0% strongly disagreed, 3.8% disagreed, 27.6% were neutral, 44.8% agreed, and 22.9% strongly agreed, as depicted in Table 3. These findings suggest a notable portion of respondents possess some understanding of the CEFR descriptors related to speaking skills. However, the substantial percentage of neutral responses indicates potential for enhancing respondents' comprehension and acquaintance with these descriptors. Although most respondents in this study affirmed their awareness of the existence of CEFR level descriptors, scholars have highlighted the lack of clear reference in CEFR rating scales, potentially causing difficulty and confusion for learners and educators (Idris & Raof, 2017). Conversely, certain studies critique the formulation and validation of the CEFR descriptors, particularly regarding their utilisation in language assessments. Criticisms encompass the abstract and overlapping wording used in the descriptors, along with potential theoretical gaps (Alderson, 2007).

Table 3*Respondents' Level of Agreement on the Descriptors of the CEFR Levels (A1, A2, B1, B2, C1, C2) for Speaking Skills*

Item 3	Counts	% of Total
1. Strongly disagree	1	1.0 %
2. Disagree	4	3.8 %
3. Neutral	29	27.6 %
4. Agree	47	44.8 %
5. Strongly agree	24	22.9 %

The study also investigated how participants perceived the impact of integrating CEFR into language instruction on the accuracy of language evaluation. Specifically, respondents were asked if they believed integrating CEFR led to improved language assessment accuracy. The results indicated that 23.8% strongly opposed this

notion, 16.2% disagreed, 18.1% were neutral, 30.5% agreed, and 11.4% strongly agreed (see Table 4). These outcomes indicate a diversity of perspectives among respondents, with a notable proportion expressing disagreement or uncertainty about the impact of CEFR on language assessment accuracy. This variance in opinions could stem from the adaptability that CEFR provides to language educators and researchers. Research from 2011 in Japan underpins this point, highlighting the way in which CEFR's global nature allows for customisation according to specific educational contexts.

Table 4

Respondents' Level of Agreement of Incorporating CEFR in Language Instruction in Improving the Accuracy of Language Assessment

Item 4	Counts	% of Total
1. Strongly disagree	25	23.8 %
2. Disagree	17	16.2 %
3. Neutral	19	18.1 %
4. Agree	32	30.5 %
5. Strongly agree	12	11.4 %

In addition, respondents were asked if using CEFR helped them set clear language learning goals. The results in Table 5 showed that 21.0% strongly disagreed, 19.0% disagreed, 17.1% were neutral, 28.6% agreed, and 14.3% strongly agreed. This indicates that while many respondents see the value of CEFR in setting clear language learning goals, quite a few have doubts about its effectiveness in this aspect.

Table 5

Respondents' Level of Agreement of Using CEFR to Set Clear Language Learning Goals

Item 5	Counts	% of Total
1. Strongly disagree	22	21.0 %
2. Disagree	20	19.0 %
3. Neutral	18	17.1 %
4. Agree	30	28.6 %
5. Strongly agree	15	14.3 %

These findings align with the perceptions of teachers regarding the effectiveness of CEFR implementation, as discussed in the study by Uri and Abd Aziz (2020). According to their findings, in the context of English education in Malaysia, it is found that when CEFR was introduced, secondary school teachers did not understand its effectiveness. However, with time, they improved and could suggest appropriate CEFR levels for reading and writing (Uri & Abd Aziz, 2020). It is important

to consider teachers' opinions as they can reveal reasons for possible resistance or support for CEFR among teachers. This helps us in better grasping the significant effects of CEFR in classrooms.

Understanding the initial challenges that teachers faced with CEFR in English education in Malaysia highlights the learning curve in adopting such framework. It is important to consider students' perspectives on CEFR, as their understanding and acceptance play a crucial role in enhancing English proficiency. By considering both teachers' and students' viewpoints, educational approaches can be tailored to improve language learning, ensuring effective implementation and benefits for all involved in the educational process.

Usefulness of CEFR-Aligned Speaking Tests in Group Discussion as Perceived by ESL Students

Respondents were inquired about the clarity and usefulness of CEFR descriptors in identifying their strengths and weaknesses in speaking abilities. The data in Table 6 demonstrates that 4.8% had reservations, 25.7% held a neutral stance, 45.7% agreed, and 23.8% strongly agreed that CEFR descriptors are clear and beneficial for pinpointing strengths and weaknesses in speaking skills. These results imply that a notable majority of respondents find CEFR descriptors valuable in evaluating and understanding their speaking skills. This is corroborated by Cinganotto's study (2019), which highlighted that CEFR descriptors are easily referenced, clear, and advantageous for students assessing their communication skills. Utilising CEFR descriptors is advocated in language classes as it allows students to determine their proficiency levels, identifying both strengths and weaknesses. While the descriptors are clear, there is a suggestion to augment them with additional specific examples to assist students struggling with language, particularly in speaking skills (Cinganotto, 2019).

Table 6
Respondents' Level of Agreement on CEFR Descriptors Clarity and Usefulness in Identifying Strengths and Weaknesses in Speaking Skills (e.g., Fluency, Pronunciation, Vocabulary)

Item 6	Counts	% of Total
1. Strongly disagree	0	0.0%
2. Disagree	5	4.8 %
3. Neutral	27	25.7 %
4. Agree	48	45.7 %
5. Strongly agree	25	23.8 %

Respondents were asked about their perception regarding the fairness of

these tests, irrespective of the test-taker’s background or native language. Table 7 revealed that 1.9% disagreed, 25.7% were neutral, 47.6% agreed, and 24.8% strongly agreed. These results suggest that most respondents view CEFR-aligned speaking tests as just and impartial, underscoring their objectivity in assessing language skills without favouring specific linguistic or cultural backgrounds. Additionally, CEFR primarily focuses on logical coherence. Some research has noted that CEFR places the least emphasis on language accuracy as a criterion for evaluation. It also encourages educators to emphasise students’ strengths rather than solely highlighting grammatical errors (Zheng et al., 2016). This approach promotes fairness and impartiality during speaking tests by encouraging students to freely express themselves using diverse methods.

Table 7
Respondents’ Level of Agreement for the CEFR-aligned Speaking Test is Fair and Unbiased

Item 7	Counts	% of Total
1. Strongly disagree	0	0.0%
2. Disagree	2	1.9 %
3. Neutral	27	25.7 %
4. Agree	50	47.6 %
5. Strongly agree	26	24.8 %

Furthermore, Table 8 presents the perspectives of respondents regarding the effectiveness of feedback provided using CEFR descriptors to enhance their speaking abilities. They were asked if the feedback aligned with CEFR descriptors contributed to their speaking skills improvement. The data displays that 1.9% held a negative opinion, 25.7% maintained a neutral viewpoint, 47.6% agreed, and 24.8% strongly agreed. These results indicate that a significant portion of respondents find feedback based on CEFR descriptors valuable in supporting their advancement in speaking skills. Students can progress from one proficiency level to another with the aid of feedback derived from CEFR descriptors (Sugg, 2019). This feedback proves to be motivational over time, boosting students’ confidence levels, as learners benefit more from continuous feedback than constant teaching. Moreover, there is evidence suggesting that such feedback fosters autonomous learning among the students themselves (Sugg, 2019).

Table 8
Respondents’ Belief Regarding the Helpfulness of Feedback Based on CEFR Descriptors in Improving Their Speaking Skills

Item 8	Counts	% of Total
1. Strongly disagree	0	0.0%
2. Disagree	2	1.9 %
3. Neutral	27	25.7 %
4. Agree	50	47.6 %
5. Strongly agree	26	24.8 %

In addition, the respondents were asked about their perception whether CEFR-aligned speaking tests hindered their progress in achieving higher language proficiency. The data in Table 9 illustrate that 2.9% strongly held a negative view, 5.7% disagreed, 25.7% remained neutral, 51.4% agreed, and 14.3% strongly concurred that CEFR-aligned speaking tests impede the attainment of improved language proficiency. These results indicate that a notable portion of respondents see CEFR-aligned speaking tests as potential obstacles in their efforts to enhance their language skills. Additionally, it indicates that a valuable aspect of the CEFR framework lies in its facilitation of easier communication about language competencies and proficiencies, thus, enabling a standardised assessment of students' language skills on an international scale. Consequently, students can ultimately attain higher language proficiency (Baharum et al., 2021).

Table 9

Respondents' Level of Agreement on the CEFR-aligned Speaking Tests as a Barrier to Achieve Better Language Proficiency

Item 9	Counts	% of Total
1. Strongly disagree	3	2.9 %
2. Disagree	6	5.7 %
3. Neutral	27	25.7 %
4. Agree	54	51.4 %
5. Strongly agree	15	14.3 %

Conclusion

This study shed light on diploma level students' perspectives regarding the usefulness of the CEFR in speaking test discussions within the context of UiTM's English language courses. The positive perceptions revealed in the data patterns emphasise that students generally find CEFR descriptors clear. The clarity and helpfulness of CEFR descriptors in identifying strengths and weaknesses, along with the perceived fairness and value of CEFR-aligned speaking tests for skill improvement, were highlighted. The study reveals that students are a moderate level of familiarity and understanding. However, the majority of the students also regarded CEFR as a barrier in their efforts

to improve their proficiency. These findings highlight the need to address apprehensions and ensure that CEFR-aligned speaking tests support learners' language proficiency development without hindering progress.

The study's findings highlight the learning curve associated with embracing such framework and emphasise the importance of considering students' perspectives on CEFR. It is worth noting that students' viewpoints on CEFR-aligned speaking test are crucial but often seem underrepresented in existing literature.

By delving into the viewpoints of diploma students, this research endeavours to provide invaluable insights into the integration and utilisation of the CEFR framework, thereby contributing to the ongoing discourse on language proficiency assessment and curriculum development. The implications of this study extend to educational institutions, language educators, and curriculum developers, equipping them with discerning insights to optimise language learning outcomes for diploma students.

Despite the positive findings, the study has limitations. Future research could benefit from a more nuanced exploration of the factors influencing students' perceptions, potentially through qualitative methods such as qualitative interviews or focus groups to capture a richer array of perspectives.

Future research could examine the factors influencing students' comprehension and acceptance of CEFR, aiming to uncover the nuances behind varying opinions. Exploring the experiences of students facing challenges in more depth could provide valuable insights into tailoring support mechanisms. Moreover, investigating the impact of enhanced teacher-student dialogues, training programmes, and clarifications on students' confidence in applying CEFR during speaking test discussions could be a fruitful avenue for future studies. Overall, further research can contribute to refining the integration of CEFR into language instruction and optimising its benefits for language learning and assessment.

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