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Needs analysis for developing a flipbook-based explicit vocabulary module in CEFR-aligned primary ESL

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Abstract

According to the English curriculum, vocabulary instruction in Malaysian primary schools is only indirectly integrated into the teaching of reading, writing, listening, and speaking skills. This study aimed to identify the need for developing a Flipbook-based Explicit Vocabulary Instructional Module (Flipbook-EVI Module) to support vocabulary teaching within the context of the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR). Employing a design and development research (DDR) approach, a needs analysis was conducted through semi-structured interviews with two English education experts and three primary school English teachers, selected via purposive sampling. Thematic analysis revealed two major themes: the expectations for vocabulary teaching and learning as perceived by experts and teachers, and the discrepancies in vocabulary teaching reported by teachers. Findings highlighted the urgent need for more targeted vocabulary teaching resources, improved pedagogical content knowledge, and enhanced teacher professional development. This study concludes that the Flipbook-EVI Module has the potential to equip primary ESL teachers with effective, engaging, and structured vocabulary instruction strategies, thereby strengthening vocabulary acquisition and retention in CEFR-aligned classrooms and improving overall language learning outcomes.

Keywords: CEFR, Flipbook and Vocabulary Teaching, Instructional module, Needs analysis, Primary school.

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1. Introduction

The Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) is widely accepted as a standard in English language instruction due to its comprehensive structure for evaluating language competence across various proficiency levels. France, Germany, and Spain have adopted CEFR in their educational institutions to establish a uniform approach to language teaching and evaluation. Malaysia has also incorporated CEFR into its curriculum. This integration aims to improve English language education by establishing explicit learning objectives and competency criteria that are in line with international standards. However, the existing curriculum often leaves ESL teachers struggling to meet specific vocabulary teaching needs, highlighting a critical gap in instructional support. This article explores the needs analysis (NA) phase of the study that involved developing an instructional module specifically designed for Vocabulary Teaching (VT) in ESL primary schools, emphasizing the importance of explicit vocabulary instruction (EVI) in promoting effective teaching and learning practices. We refer to the module as *Flipbook-EVI*.

The difficulties educators encounter in delivering vocabulary lessons that comply with the CEFR and take into account the particular requirements of Malaysian pupils give rise to the need for a customized instructional module. Teachers frequently deal with problems like limited resources, poor training, and a lack of direction on effective teaching techniques. This research's NA study aims to highlight these difficulties and acquire insights into teachers' expectations, which will ultimately direct the design and development of a useful and effective EVI instructional module.

Existing literature underscores the significance of vocabulary acquisition as a fundamental aspect of language learning. Scholars emphasize the importance of employing effective techniques in vocabulary instruction to enhance students' listening, speaking, reading, and writing abilities. However, there is a distinct lack of research addressing vocabulary instruction within the CEFR framework in Malaysia [1, 2]. Research by Abdulrahman [3] and Folse [4] highlights the challenges learners face due to limited vocabulary, impacting their overall communication proficiency. Additionally, Namaziandost, et al. [5] suggest that vocabulary improvement is essential for developing comprehensive linguistic abilities. Studies conducted by Mukundan and Nimehchisalem [6] and Sahib and Stapa [7] mostly concentrate on the wider implementation of the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR), without delving into specific techniques for teaching vocabulary. Although researchers like Nation and Nation [8] and Schmitt [9] have investigated effective approaches for teaching vocabulary, these studies do not directly correspond to the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR), resulting in a lack of knowledge on how to incorporate these techniques into CEFR-aligned curricula. This discrepancy underscores the necessity of conducting a thorough needs analysis study to ascertain the challenges and needs of vocabulary instruction within the CEFR curriculum in Malaysia. Such a study would yield significant insights for designing focused instructional approaches that are in line with the CEFR framework.

To address these gaps, this study employs the design and development research (DDR) process Richey and Klein [10] beginning with the needs analysis (NA) phase to guide the development of a vocabulary teaching (VT) module aligned with the Year 5 CEFR curriculum. This research aims to investigate the need for the Flipbook-EVI module to facilitate Year 5 CEFR-based English Language Teaching and Learning in primary schools. This method ensures that the module is both useful and contextually relevant by anticipating the needs and challenges faced by Year 5 English teachers and using that information to guide decision-making.

This research is significant for its localized approach to teaching vocabulary within the CEFR framework. Unlike existing studies that broadly examine CEFR's effectiveness, this study focuses on the specific needs of Malaysian teachers, considering the country's unique linguistic and educational context. By developing a targeted instructional module, this study seeks to bridge the gap between theoretical concepts and practical implementation, offering a concrete strategy for teachers navigating the complexities of vocabulary teaching in CEFR-based curricula.

The upcoming sections will outline the theoretical framework to clarify the basis and the research processes involved in developing the Flipbook-EVI module for primary ESL teachers.

1.1. Theoretical Framework: McKillips Discrepancy Model

This study utilizes the Discrepancy Model developed by McKillip [11] as the basis for the needs analysis phase. The Discrepancy Model helps to identify differences between the existing state and the anticipated results in language teaching and learning. It involves a three-step process: Establishing goals for what should be achieved, assessing the current instructional environment, and identifying discrepancies where performance does not meet expectations. These discrepancies emphasize particular areas that require intervention, thus guiding the development of focused instructional approaches. According to McKillip [11], if performance is below the intended levels, it indicates a need that must be addressed. This model provides a systematic approach for understanding and addressing the challenges teachers face in aligning vocabulary instruction with the CEFR framework.

2. Research Method

2.1. Research Design

The needs analysis was conducted using a qualitative design and employed semi-structured interviews for data gathering. This strategy is utilized to gather the viewpoints of experts and teachers regarding vocabulary teaching and learning in primary schools. The semi-structured interview was selected for its ability to conduct a thorough investigation and gather specific data on the research participants' experiences and emotions [12]. The researcher can effectively monitor and investigate the study participants' attitudes, interests, sentiments, concerns, and values through interviews [13]. This approach is appropriate for conducting a needs analysis study because it helps researchers to pinpoint the root cause of a

current issue. By collecting relevant data, the researcher can then implement the required measures to address the problem [11]. The researchers utilized this method to investigate and uncover issues related to vocabulary teaching and learning aligned with the CEFR-based curriculum, as the NA phase is crucial for shaping the subsequent design and development phases [10]. They stated that the design and development phases encompass the systematic approach of planning and creating instructional materials. The design phase is centered around the identification of objectives and strategies, whereas the development phase entails the development and enhancement of the instructional content according to the design plan. Document analysis was also used in conjunction with informant data to verify the information provided by the research participants.

2.2. Selection of the Participants

Qualitative sampling prioritizes the quality of data and is influenced by data saturation. It is important to have a sample size that is large enough to gain a comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon under study, while also being small enough to avoid hindering in-depth, case-based analysis of qualitative data [14].

The sample size for this study is defined by data saturation, which is achieved by ensuring that it is large enough to repeat data sorting within every item [15]. Saturation is commonly utilized to determine sample size and evaluate the adequacy of qualitative data [16]. The data saturation principle, as outlined by Guba and Lincoln [17] suggests that the sample size should be determined by the point at which no new information is obtained, known as the informational redundancy criteria. Malterud, et al. [18] embrace the concept of information power as a guiding principle, stating that a sample with more information power requires a smaller sample size, and vice versa.

While there is no definitive data available to determine the appropriate sampling size for qualitative interview research, Kshetree [19] and Purwianingsih, et al. [20] has proposed that the optimal number of participants ranges from 1 to 3 or 30 to 50 individuals, depending on the level of depth required for the study. This study focuses on determining the need for a Flipbook-EVI module for English teachers of Year 5 students and gathering expert opinions on a practical instructional module for EVI integrated with a CEFR-aligned curriculum. Five participants were chosen through purposive sampling based on their expertise in the field of study, as determined by their qualifications, achievements, and experiences in English education. For this study, the research participants included three English instructors with more than ten years of experience teaching the language as well as two English education specialists who are CEFR master trainers active in the dissemination courses of the recently integrated CEFR.

Table 1 provides a summary of the research participants' details.

Table 1.
Research participants in the NA study.

Research participants	Age	Education background	Graduated from	Position	Experience in English Education
Teacher Ellyn	54	Master in English education	Local University	English teacher & CEFR Master trainer	28 years
Teacher Shania	52	Bachelor's Degree (Honors) in English education	Teacher's Trainee Institute	English teacher & CEFR Master trainer	26 years
Mr. Sheeran	40	Master in English education	Local University	English teacher	14 years
Mr. Zackary	39	Bachelor's Degree (Honors) in English education	Teacher's Trainee Institute	English teacher	11 years
Teacher Adele	34	Bachelor's Degree (Honors) in English education	Overseas University	English teacher	10 years

As indicated in Table 1, the participants share a common background- their teaching experience ranges between 10 and 28 years. Three of the teachers work in rural schools, while the other two teach in suburban schools. Both experts and English teachers are selected as informants for their capacity to offer insights on issues related to vocabulary teaching and learning (T&L) and facilities in the implementation of CEFR-based curriculum. Furthermore, teachers can also share their personal perspectives on the topic and contemporary challenges particularly with regard to the necessity of enhancing vocabulary instruction and acquisition.

2.3. Data Collection Methods and Procedures

The study used semi-structured interviews for data collection along with document analysis to explore the perspectives of experts and teachers on vocabulary teaching and learning in the integration of the CEFR-aligned curriculum [21]. This method was selected for its ability to facilitate reciprocal interaction between the interviewer and the informants for probing responses and to allow the interviewer to spontaneously generate follow-up questions based on the informants' responses. The interview protocol included eight questions for the experts and ten questions for the teachers, which were prepared based on the study conducted by Galletta [12]. Three experts, one specializing in language translation, examined and verified the interview protocol to ensure the credibility of the information gathered from the informants [22]. The interview questions were piloted with two teachers to evaluate their suitability and to gather initial suggestions regarding the feasibility of the research Barriball and While [23]. In addition, pilot interviews provided training to the researchers in conducting semi-structured interviews and establishing rapport with the informants Galletta [12].

The interviews were conducted face-to-face in English at the participants' workplace after scheduling sessions with them. Thus, a semi-structured interview was conducted to address the research question below:

What is the need for a Flipbook-EVI module to facilitate Year 5 CEFR-based English Language Teaching and Learning in primary school?

- 1) What are practical instructional strategies and approaches for vocabulary teaching and learning (T&L) with a CEFR-aligned curriculum based on teachers' views?
- 2) What are the challenges and expectations of vocabulary teaching and learning (T&L) with a CEFR-aligned curriculum among teachers?
- 3) What are the learners' characteristics and responses toward vocabulary teaching and learning based on the literature review and teachers' perceptions?

The participants were notified of the scheduled time for the interview, which was expected to last a minimum of 30 minutes [24]. The duration of the session varied depending on the informants' responses, with some sessions exceeding one hour. The interviews were recorded to aid the researcher in transcribing them [24]. Afterward, a member check was conducted whereby the transcripts were sent back to the informants for them to evaluate and confirm the provided information [24]. The informants also supplied documents like lesson plans and pictures to assist the researcher in data analysis. These documents were used for data triangulation to enhance the validity and credibility of the research findings. Data were also obtained during the English in Camp (EIC) Programme held by the Padang Terap Education Department on October 18, 2024.

2.4. Data Analysis Technique

Data analysis began immediately after the interviews. The interviews were recorded and transcribed verbatim. This technique allows the researcher to thoroughly examine each piece of data comprehensively [25]. After transcribing the data, the researcher conducted the analysis using [26] approach to theme analysis.

Deductive thematic analysis was utilized as a method for analyzing the data. The primary themes were identified by reviewing essential aspects of the theoretical framework which is the Discrepancy Model [11] and the interview transcripts. The subthemes were recognized after generating the codes, resulting in a largely inductive approach to the research. The subthemes were grouped and linked to corresponding codes [27]. Coding development focuses on semantic orientation, where acquired information was evaluated for explicit meaning to create codes [28].

The data were analyzed manually following [26] six-step process to generate the analysis results. It involved familiarizing with the data, generating initial codes, searching for themes, reviewing themes, defining and naming themes, and producing the final report. This systematic approach helped the researcher to thoroughly interpret and organize the data, leading to clear and meaningful analysis results. The semi-structured interview analysis was cross-referenced with document analysis. These findings were used as a foundation for developing the Flipbook EVI Module for primary schools.

3. Results and Discussion

The goal of the need for analysis phase is to determine the need of developing an instructional module for vocabulary teaching in ESL primary school. Table 2 displays the codes gathered from the interview transcripts and the themes derived from the [29].

Table 2.

Themes and Subthemes from the Interviews.

Themes/ Definition	Subtheme generated from the transcripts	Codes generated from the interview transcripts
Expectations in Vocabulary Teaching and Learning <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The expectation in the Flipbook-EVI Module refers to the anticipation of English teachers' performance level and hope McKillip [11] in vocabulary T&L aligned with CEFR-based curriculum. 	Vocabulary Teaching & Learning resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Easy access to vocabulary T&L materials MOE should provide vocabulary T&L materials Internet /e-learning materials DidikTv KPM
	Pedagogical Content Knowledge	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Poses Vocabulary teaching knowledge from bachelor's degree education Well-equipped with VT content and pedagogical skill Versatile
	Instructional strategy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Active learning 21st-century learning style Hillmayr, et al. [30] and Wekerle and Kollar [31]. Integrate ICT to vocabulary T&L Explicit Vocabulary Instruction
	Teachers' professional development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> In-house training SISC+ regular visit Self-learning Continuing Professional Development
Discrepancies in Vocabulary T&L aligned with the CEFR curriculum <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Discrepancies are problems McKillip [11]. It refers to identifying the reality or issues of the current situation in teaching and learning English compared to the expectation to the ideal state of teachers' readiness and students' attitude and characteristics towards VT McKillip [11] 	Vocabulary Teaching Nature	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Difficult/ challenging to teach in CEFR-based curriculum Overemphasize on the grammar and the teaching of other skills. Vocabulary is implicitly taught in the current curriculum
	Complexity of the Textbook	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Unfamiliar cultures High-level content Complex language use The content of the textbook is presented in a complicated way
	Insufficiency in Vocabulary T&L resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> VT references are lacking Learning modules only focus on drilling The English Year 5 textbook is the main references English CEFR-based textbook is complicated
	Teachers' perception of students' characteristics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Low expectations of students' performance in English Students are weak with basic concepts of English Passive Teacher-dependent Lack of motivation Different learning style
	Teachers' readiness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Competency dilemma in teaching English aligned with CEFR curriculum and textbooks. Lack of teaching aids Teachers need to revise their VT

The findings sprouted two main themes: First, the expectation in vocabulary teaching and learning standards according to the perspectives of CEFR master trainers and teachers, and second, the discrepancies in vocabulary teaching and learning.

Figure 1 represents the expectations of teaching and learning standards according to the perspectives of CEFR master trainers and teachers

3.1. Expectations in Vocabulary Teaching and Learning

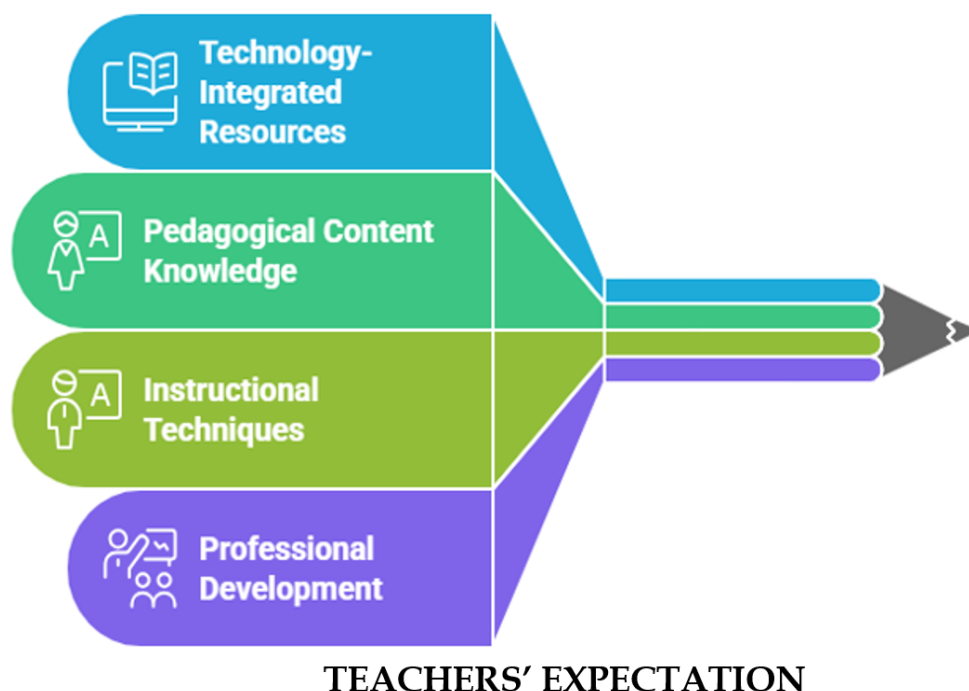


Figure 1.
Expectations in Vocabulary Teaching and Learning Standards based on CEFR.

As indicated in Figure 1, four main factors contributed to the teachers' and experts' expectations of CEFR, which are: vocabulary teaching and learning resources, pedagogical content knowledge, instructional techniques, and teachers' professional growth.

3.1.1. Need for Technology-Integrated and Explicit Vocabulary Resources in CEFR Implementation

The CEFR master trainers, who served as expert participants in this study, emphasised the importance of aligning lesson objectives with content and assessment goals to ensure meaningful learning experiences. This reflects Taba [32] perspective, which asserts that curriculum development must be grounded in a thorough understanding of learner needs and societal expectations to design relevant and effective educational programmes. Such alignment is crucial in equipping teachers to navigate curriculum complexities, promote purposeful learning, and contribute meaningfully to the success of educational reform initiatives in Malaysia [33].

Teachers consistently expressed the need for more interactive and non-traditional teaching resources to support vocabulary instruction, particularly within the CEFR-aligned curriculum. Many highlighted the value of technology-integrated tools such as YouTube videos, interactive simulations, and an Explicit Vocabulary Instructional (EVI) module as vital in making vocabulary instruction more engaging, effective, and responsive to learners' diverse needs. Participants noted that such resources could reduce teacher workload, increase confidence, and enable more personalised and dynamic vocabulary instruction.

"An explicit vocabulary teaching module can help teachers teach vocabulary effectively and make it easier for the low-proficiency students to grasp the words." – Teacher Shania

"Frankly speaking, it will be more comfortable for teachers to teach when we have easy access to vocabulary T&L materials." – Teacher Sheeran

"MOE should add more vocabulary T&L materials in many forms (physical or digital)." – Teacher Ellyn

"I used to teach in the city previously... the students are okay with implicit vocabulary learning. But now, it's different. We do need the supplementary module. Dealing with low-proficiency learners from rural areas requires teachers to be innovative and more creative. The use of a module is welcomed, particularly for improving vocabulary size and retention." – Teacher Adele

"I face a lot of issues teaching vocabulary retention. I think I need more professional courses on the CEFR-based curriculum, or maybe regular visits from SISC+ officers so that our techniques stay updated. Or at least, a module would be a good alternative to avoid disappointment in vocabulary instruction." – Mr. Zachary

These insights highlight the recurring concern among teachers regarding the insufficiency of vocabulary resources especially when working with low-proficiency learners. Teachers frequently rely on textbooks, but their effectiveness depends heavily on alignment with the curriculum, the clarity of explanations, and the inclusion of meaningful, engaging

activities [34]. While textbooks provide structure, they should not be used as the sole resource or treated as a complete curriculum [35].

Integrating digital tools such as Flipbook-based modules, video content, and interactive simulations can significantly enhance student engagement and outcomes [30, 31]. Numerous studies support the incorporation of such tools to make instruction more dynamic, personalised, and effective [36-39]. Additionally, the use of these technologies has given rise to innovative pedagogical approaches such as game-based learning and flipped classrooms [40], which offer greater interactivity and deeper vocabulary retention.

3.1.2. Need for Strengthening Pedagogical Content Knowledge (PCK)

This subtheme reveals that teachers recognise a gap in their pedagogical content knowledge (PCK) for vocabulary instruction and stress the need for its continuous development. There is also a suggestion to revise the pedagogical syllabus in teacher training institutions to better prepare future educators. Both Teacher Adele and Teacher Sheeran voiced the importance of upgrading PCK to support more effective vocabulary instruction, particularly within a CEFR-aligned curriculum.

“Actually, when I was doing my degree in Queensland, I was introduced to several techniques or strategies such as the use of DOLCH sight words to teach vocabulary effectively. Both implicit and explicit techniques complement each other. Thus, I find that our educational system is lacking in these.” – Teacher Adele

“I have been teaching for more or less twenty years. And I kept using the same drilling and picture cards in teaching vocabulary. I really do think that our pedagogical content knowledge needs to be upgraded. Maybe the syllabus in IPG also has to be revised so that future teachers will be more creative and informative in teaching vocabulary.” – Teacher Shania

These excerpts highlight the pivotal role that PCK plays in vocabulary instruction and reinforce the need for continuous professional development. The concerns raised align with the findings of Ball, et al. [41], who emphasised that effective teaching depends on the integration of content knowledge with pedagogical strategies. Their study of pre-service English teachers revealed that, while many were confident in general teaching methods, they often lacked the specific content knowledge required to teach language elements such as vocabulary. This led them to rely heavily on their PCK to adapt and integrate available resources into their lessons, especially in the absence of structured, curriculum-aligned guidance.

The data from this study similarly suggest that teachers’ decisions and lesson planning related to vocabulary instruction are largely driven by their PCK. This supports the view that PCK acts as the bridge between pedagogical approaches and the subject matter being taught. As highlighted by Kshetree [19] and Purwianingsih, et al. [20], PCK enables teachers to transform complex content into accessible and meaningful formats for learners. It is not only foundational for instructional effectiveness but also essential for improving student comprehension, particularly in vocabulary learning where clarity, scaffolding, and relevance are key.

Given the increased demands of CEFR implementation and the challenges posed by teaching low-proficiency learners, the professional development of teachers in this area is crucial. Therefore, the upgrade of pedagogical training programmes, particularly those offered in teacher education institutes, must be prioritised. Strengthening PCK will enable teachers to implement innovative vocabulary teaching strategies and foster better vocabulary retention and application among learners.

3.1.3. Need for Instructional Techniques in Vocabulary Teaching

In the context of the CEFR-aligned curriculum, teaching vocabulary effectively requires deliberate instructional planning and the use of varied, evidence-based strategies. Participants in this study highlighted the inadequacy of relying solely on implicit vocabulary instruction and expressed a clear need for more structured, explicit instructional techniques. Tools such as the Frayer Model, Semantic Mapping, Graphic Organizers, and Word Anchors were suggested by experts as effective methods to improve students’ vocabulary acquisition and retention. There was a shared sentiment among teachers that their current strategies were limited in scope and lacked innovation, especially when catering to diverse learner needs. The following excerpts illustrate this concern:

“I think there is a need to design or develop a new module of explicit vocabulary instruction because it will help teachers and students teach and learn vocabulary effectively, especially in rural areas where vocabulary needs to be strengthened first.” – Teacher Shania

“I find myself continuously using the same strategy or technique to teach vocabulary explicitly in order to support implicit vocabulary lessons in the classroom.” – Mr. Sheeran

“Adequately prepared? I still think I need a mentor. I need guidance. I need to learn more about vocabulary teaching. Although this is my tenth year, I feel I still lack knowledge in many areas, and vocabulary is one of them. I want to master it so that my students can benefit more from my teaching.” – Teacher Adele

These reflections point to a pressing need for targeted professional development and improved instructional design in vocabulary teaching. The over-reliance on repetitive methods and the absence of explicit vocabulary-focused training can hinder student engagement and limit their ability to use newly acquired words across contexts. Khair and Shah [42] also caution that a lack of effective instructional techniques may result in unengaging lessons and poor vocabulary retention.

Research supports the call for diversified instructional practices that align with learners’ varying levels of word knowledge. Baker [43]; Graves [44] and Workie and Feleke [45] emphasize that vocabulary instruction should be

systematic, explicit, and tailored to promote depth of learning. To achieve this, teachers must actively engage students through strategic, student-centred approaches and continually seek out effective models and tools that foster active participation in vocabulary lessons.

In sum, this theme underscores a dual need: the enhancement of teachers' instructional repertoire and the provision of professional support systems that enable them to implement best practices in vocabulary teaching, particularly in the context of the CEFR-aligned curriculum.

3.1.4. Need for Continuous Professional Development and Professional Learning Communities

Another key theme that emerged was the need for English teachers to actively participate in Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) and engage in Continuous Professional Development (CPD) to enhance their vocabulary instruction within the CEFR-aligned curriculum. Participants acknowledged that while CEFR familiarisation courses were initially conducted at the start of the reform, these sessions were limited in scope and did not provide sustained support. Teachers expressed a strong desire for ongoing training that would deepen their understanding of CEFR principles, especially in relation to vocabulary teaching and assessment practices.

One teacher shared:

"I only attended the familiarisation course once. I don't think it is enough to get the whole picture. I really think I need to be enrolled in more professional development or CPD courses if I want to stay relevant in this field. I must keep myself up to date to teach vocabulary effectively and not neglect this area in the curriculum." – Teacher Ellyn

Teacher Ellyn

Another echoed this sentiment:

"When CEFR was first introduced, there were some courses. But I haven't attended any since then. I think I need more sessions or at least regular SISC+ officer visits so that I can consult on how to teach vocabulary effectively within this CEFR-based framework. Everything still feels complicated to me." – Teacher Shania

These reflections suggest that teachers feel underprepared to implement vocabulary instruction that aligns with the CEFR standards. Effective CPD is essential for bridging these gaps and ensuring that educators are confident and capable in delivering CEFR-aligned lessons. Devi [46] notes that professionally trained teachers are better able to design and implement effective instruction using a variety of techniques and technologies suited to diverse learners. Similarly, Nalbantoğlu and Bümen [47] found that sustained CPD enables teachers to adapt more effectively to curriculum changes and make instructional decisions with greater intentionality. Heitink, et al. [48] also emphasized the positive impact of collaborative curriculum design through PLCs on teachers' understanding and application of curricular shifts.

In summary, the findings highlight that successful implementation of vocabulary instruction in CEFR-based classrooms requires a combination of sustained CPD, collaboration through PLCs, strengthened pedagogical content knowledge, and access to effective instructional tools. As Gyawali [49] affirms, targeted and ongoing professional development is vital in equipping teachers with the necessary competencies to navigate curriculum changes and improve instructional effectiveness.

3.2. The Discrepancies in Vocabulary Teaching and Learning

The second theme in Figure 2 involves identifying discrepancies or issues that highlight the needs in vocabulary teaching and learning in CEFR-based curriculum. This theme discusses the difficulties teachers encounter in vocabulary instruction namely the lack of resources for teaching vocabulary, the complexity of the textbook, teachers' perceptions of students' characteristics, and their readiness to teach the topics in CEFR Year 5 textbook. Figure 2 shows the discrepancies between the the expected outcomes of vocabulary instruction within the CEFR-based curriculum and the actual challenges teachers face.

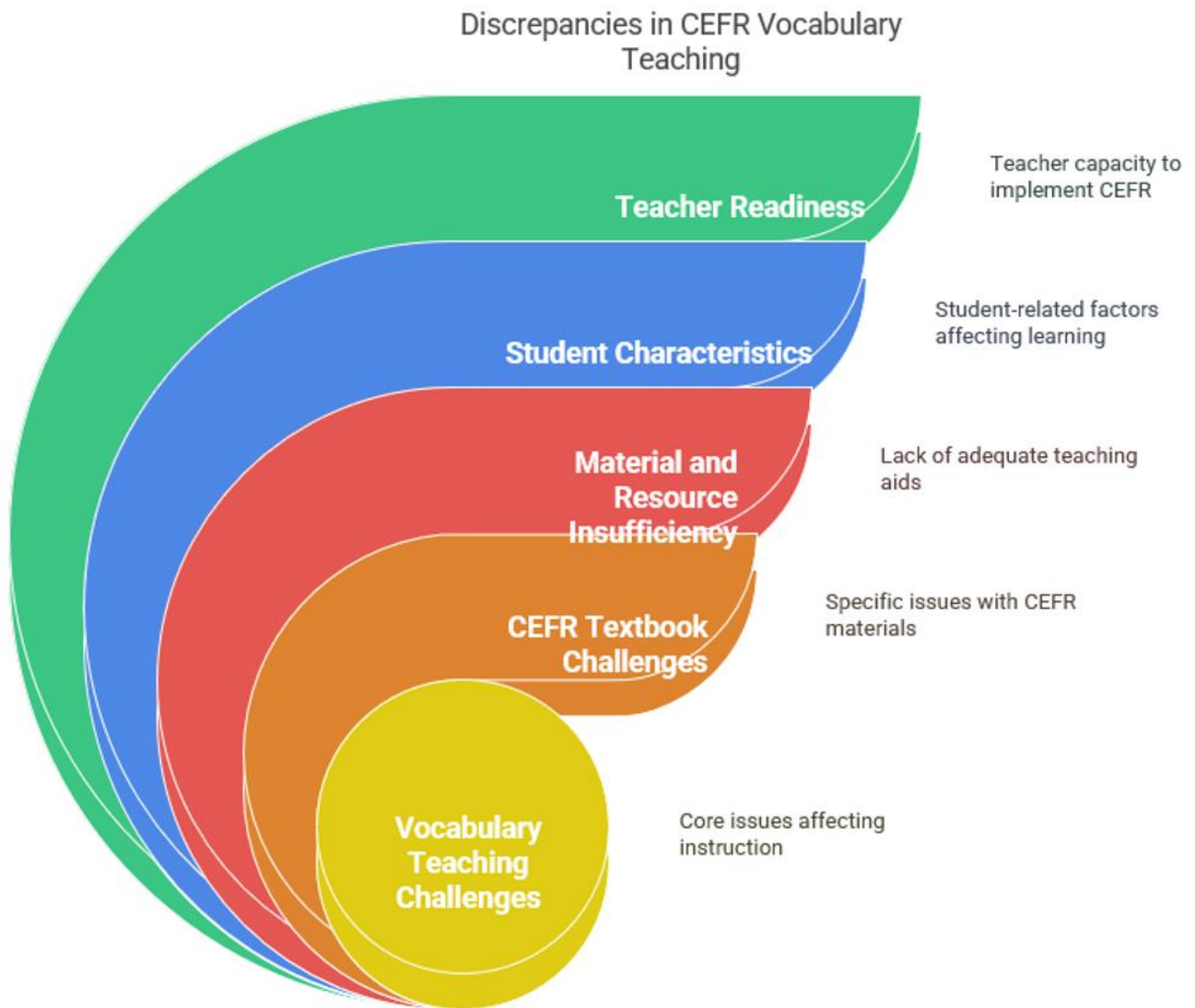


Figure 2.
Discrepancies in Vocabulary Teaching aligned with CEFR curriculum.

3.2.1. Challenges of Vocabulary Teaching Within the CEFR-Aligned Curriculum

All teacher participants reported that vocabulary instruction is particularly challenging when implemented under the constraints of a curriculum aligned with the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR) Nawai and Said [50]. A significant concern raised was the emphasis on implicit vocabulary teaching within the national syllabus (Dokumen Standard Kurikulum dan Pentaksiran – DSKP), which limits opportunities for systematic and direct vocabulary instruction especially problematic for learners with low proficiency levels in rural and underserved areas such as Padang Terap.

Teacher feedback illustrates this issue:

“Teaching vocabulary implicitly with the teaching of other skills as stated in the DSKP makes the students forget the words easily as they are not being highlighted.” – Teacher Sheeran

“For high-proficiency students, yes, implicit learning through context works. But when dealing with low-proficiency students here, vocabulary must be explicitly taught to support their learning.” – Teacher Adele

“Vocabulary is very much neglected because teachers are too focused on finishing the syllabus as stated in the DSKP.” – Teacher Ellyne

“Based on the DSKP, if we teach listening today, we must move to speaking the following day. Therefore, words are only encountered implicitly. We do not and cannot focus on direct vocabulary teaching, which works better for low-proficiency learners.” – Teacher Ellyne

“I think now, learning vocabulary implicitly alone in the classroom makes the situation worse.” – Teacher Adele

These reflections indicate a critical mismatch between curricular demands and the needs of low-proficiency learners. The findings align with Suardi and Sakti [51], who highlighted the multifaceted nature of vocabulary instruction, noting that teachers often struggle to select appropriate words due to the breadth of English vocabulary and the varied proficiency levels of their students.

In summary, the current curriculum's implicit approach appears to hinder vocabulary acquisition among struggling learners. There is a clear call from teachers for more flexibility and explicit instructional strategies to address these challenges and improve vocabulary retention and development.

3.2.2. Challenges Posed by CEFR-Aligned Textbooks for Vocabulary Instruction

Another concern raised by participants relates to the challenges posed by the CEFR-aligned textbook. Teachers reported difficulties due to unfamiliar cultural references, complex content, and visually overcrowded layouts. These issues hinder students' comprehension and pose challenges for teachers trying to teach both language and culture simultaneously. Teacher feedback illustrates these concerns:

"The content in the textbook is based on skills, so we cannot leave it. Since many contexts are from abroad, it is difficult for us to teach the language and the culture at the same time." – Teacher Ellyn

"The arrangement of exercises in the Year Five textbook is one thing. It is too crowded on one page—complicated. Previously, I could cover one page in one lesson." – Teacher Adele

"Some may not find the book user-friendly because the background is from the UK. Students have difficulty comprehending the context while learning the language." – Teacher Sheeran

"In my opinion, the textbook is not suitable for some rural schools. The content is overly advanced for them." – Mr. Zachary

"When introducing CEFR content, we face topics related to British culture or places around the world—things unfamiliar to our students. It's hard for them to engage or understand the context." – Teacher Adele

These accounts highlight the challenges of using a CEFR-aligned textbook that heavily draws on foreign contexts. Teachers found the textbook culturally distant, overly complex, and not sufficiently scaffolded for low-proficiency or rural learners. Vocabulary development, in particular, was often overlooked in favour of broader skill-based tasks. This echoes findings by Muhamad and Kiely [52], who noted that vocabulary receives minimal attention in the DSKP and Scheme of Work (SoW), where it is listed without instructional guidance.

Similar issues have been documented in previous studies. Aziz and Uri [53]; Kiss and Rimbar [54] and Ngu and Aziz [55] highlighted the challenges of using CEFR-aligned resources in Malaysian rural classrooms, particularly due to the lack of cultural relevance. Ngu and Aziz [55] found that the Ministry of Education's CEFR-aligned resources such as textbooks, manuals, and audio-visual materials rely heavily on British culture, making classroom adaptation difficult. This aligns with Madkur, et al. [56], who emphasized that language and culture are interdependent and must be contextually situated.

Globally, similar challenges have been noted. Maryo [57] reported CEFR implementation difficulties in Indonesia due to the need for cultural adaptation, while Arellano A [58] found CEFR guidelines in Chile problematic, especially regarding curriculum design and assessment. These studies underline the complexity of aligning CEFR vocabulary instruction with local educational contexts.

However, contrasting findings by Yang, et al. [59] argue that integrating cultural content enhances vocabulary learning by fostering cultural awareness. They advocate for vocabulary instruction that includes diverse cultural contexts to better prepare learners for authentic communication.

These findings underscore the need for CEFR-aligned vocabulary teaching materials that are pedagogically sound, locally relevant, and culturally responsive especially for rural and disadvantaged learners.

3.2.3. Insufficient Vocabulary Teaching Materials and Resources

This subtheme highlights teachers' concerns about the insufficiency of vocabulary teaching materials, especially in relation to new topics introduced in the CEFR-based English curriculum [33]. Teachers expressed the hope that the Ministry of Education would provide more accessible and relevant vocabulary teaching resources. In the absence of official materials, many educators reported relying on teaching aids shared via social media platforms such as Telegram and Facebook to support vocabulary learning in their classrooms.

Teacher Adele shared her views on professional development needs, stating:

"The type of courses that I like maybe... maybe a course on different techniques—on different explicit techniques, or implicit too, for example."

Similarly, Teacher Ellyn emphasized the value of explicit vocabulary materials:

"An explicit vocabulary module is very important in learning because it seems that students cannot really master the main four language skills due to the lack of vocabulary. I always have to prepare remedial or enrichment tasks to help my students with vocabulary. If not, they will just forget and not be able to recall the words the following day. So, if there is one, it would be very helpful."

Mr. Sheeran also reflected on the scarcity of vocabulary-specific tools:

"Concerning the resources, I can say that there are not many tools... and there's a lack of exposure too."

These accounts reflect a shared understanding among teachers that vocabulary is foundational for developing other language skills which are listening, speaking, reading, and writing and thus warrants focused instruction. This aligns with findings by Sovakandan, et al. [60]; Stæhr [61] and Workie and Feleke [45], who argue that vocabulary knowledge significantly impacts learners' overall language proficiency.

The teachers' practices of integrating vocabulary instruction across skills and sourcing external resources underscore the necessity for explicit, structured vocabulary modules. These findings call for targeted support from educational

authorities to provide well-designed, culturally relevant supplementary materials, especially for contexts where existing resources are insufficient or not locally aligned.

Ultimately, this strengthens the argument for the development of a Flipbook-based Explicit Vocabulary Instruction (Flipbook-EVI) Module tailored to support CEFR-based curriculum implementation in diverse classroom settings.

3.2.4. Students' Characteristics (Low Vocabulary Retention and Motivation in Rural Setting)

Teachers from rural schools reported that many of their students displayed low English language proficiency and struggled with retaining vocabulary. The vocabulary introduced was often considered too advanced, and the conventional, implicit teaching approach hindered long-term retention. Teachers observed that students quickly forgot newly learned terms, which negatively impacted learning progression and reduced motivation, especially among lower-performing students. The implicit teaching approach prescribed by CEFR-aligned textbooks was found to be inadequate for students in rural schools, many of whom come from low socioeconomic backgrounds.

Teacher Ellyn shared:

"The main challenge is they can't remember the vocabulary for the long term. The words are high-level, so we have to work hard to teach them. Most of the time, they just forget the words after a few days... or maybe the day after."

Mr. Zachary similarly commented on learner attitude and readiness:

"One challenge when teaching vocabulary is the willingness of the students. Some think that when there are no exams, learning isn't important. It's their attitude first. Also, they don't even have basic vocabulary."

Three teachers specifically noted the struggle to manage underperforming students, some of whom could be classified as functionally illiterate in English. These teachers highlighted that strict adherence to the CEFR-based curriculum and the textbook's Scheme of Work left little time to focus on foundational vocabulary building.

Teacher Adele reflected:

"I think it relates to the students' background—that's the first challenge. They come from rural areas. English is not spoken at home. School is the only place where they hear the language. The students here are quite weak in English, and learning vocabulary implicitly alone in class makes the situation worse."

The teachers also mentioned that these pupils depended almost entirely on school for their language exposure and quickly lost interest if lessons lacked structure or engaging material. They emphasized the need to adapt teaching to diverse learning styles, acknowledging that students' sense of motivation is closely tied to self-esteem, purpose, and feelings of success. These observations support Littlejohn, et al. [62] assertion that students may become disengaged when instruction lacks clear structure, stimulation, and relevance.

These findings underscore the limitations of implicit vocabulary instruction in low-resource rural contexts. They also emphasize the urgent need for structured, explicit vocabulary instruction and resources tailored to students with weaker foundations in English.

3.2.5. Teachers' Readiness and Capacity to Implement CEFR-Aligned Vocabulary Instruction

This subtheme highlights that teachers' readiness and ability to teach vocabulary in alignment with the CEFR framework is significantly influenced by their language proficiency, pedagogical knowledge, and access to resources. Many participants expressed uncertainty about the appropriate methods for teaching vocabulary and integrating it meaningfully within the CEFR context. In particular, challenges arose when dealing with complex content and culturally unfamiliar material, further compounded by limitations in infrastructure and training.

Teacher Ellyn remarked:

"The issues are about the skills—higher skills for the students. Teachers also face problems because the content in the textbook is based on foreign countries. So, it's difficult to develop tools to help us teach. To solve the problem, we use ICT, but we face difficulties. For example, in this rural area, resources are limited—no TV, broken computers, and poor internet coverage."

Teacher Shania noted the extra effort required for preparation:

"Sometimes, I need to Google the correct pronunciation first. And sometimes I need to find the meaning of the word. Unfamiliar content—like 'proboscis monkey'—makes me work harder despite having many classes daily. I need to be ready in various aspects."

Infrastructure constraints were similarly echoed by Teacher Sheeran:

"The internet connection is also lousy here. Only one class can use the computer lab at a time. Most classroom LCDs are also broken. This needs to be addressed first before anything else."

Although the Malaysian Ministry of Education (MOE) has provided some audiovisual resources to support CEFR implementation, these are insufficient, particularly in rural schools [55]. The findings from this study are consistent with past research, which identified key obstacles including poor infrastructure [63], weak internet connectivity [55], and inadequate technological tools [64, 65]. As Burnett [66] and Sabzian, et al. [67] argue, no technological tool can universally fit all learning environments; rather, teachers need an evolving understanding of the interplay between curriculum, pedagogy, and technology.

To overcome these barriers, there is a need for greater investment in IT infrastructure and technical support, especially in underserved areas. Pelila, et al. [68] emphasized that the creation of conducive learning environments is essential for the successful integration of technology into teaching. The enhancement of technological readiness may also promote teachers' confidence and motivation to engage in vocabulary instruction more effectively through digital means.

Ultimately, these findings suggest the necessity for strategic teacher professional development and localized resource design to align CEFR-aligned vocabulary instruction with the realities of rural classrooms. Understanding teachers' perspectives is critical for policymakers to design effective support mechanisms that bridge the gap between curriculum policy and classroom practice.

4. Conclusion

In conclusion, the findings of this study provide crucial insights for the development of the Flipbook-EVI module tailored to the realities of the current educational context. The Needs Analysis (NA) identifies specific challenges, expectations, and requirements in vocabulary teaching and learning within a CEFR-aligned curriculum, as perceived by both teachers and experts. Despite their varied educational backgrounds, participants highlighted similar issues, underscoring a shared need for improvement in instructional support and resources.

This study also offers practical recommendations for vocabulary teaching methods that align with CEFR content and learning standards. Customizing teaching resources to meet the contextual needs of both learners and educators ensures greater curricular relevance and instructional impact. As Alanazi, et al. [69] affirms, effective lesson planning is foundational to lesson success; thus, careful design and development of the Flipbook-EVI module are essential to address the identified shortcomings in rural primary school settings.

The study aligns with Taba [32] of curriculum development, which emphasizes the importance of identifying learner needs and addressing them through structured program design [70]. The needs analysis findings highlight the necessity for instructional tools that are not only pedagogically sound but also adaptable to current classroom environments. Furthermore, aligning with McKillip [11] view, conducting systematic needs analysis helps educators design purposeful, resource-efficient teaching interventions.

Additionally, the findings stress the urgent need for technology integration in language instruction. Leveraging digital tools particularly those compatible with both online and offline use can help overcome connectivity issues in rural schools while gradually enhancing teachers' digital competence. A Flipbook-based explicit vocabulary module provides a promising, flexible solution that can enhance teaching effectiveness and support gradual technological adoption.

Finally, the insights from this needs analysis can inform the Ministry of Education and policymakers in designing more responsive support systems for English language teachers. Tailoring resources to student-specific needs not only improves vocabulary acquisition but also contributes to more equitable and effective educational outcomes across diverse school settings.

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