ARTICLE

Enhancing EFL Learners' Communication Skills: A CEFR-Inspired Approach for High School Students

Shamim Akhter [1]* [iD], *Khalid Ahmed* [1], *Fatimah Tambi* [1], *Siti Rokiah Siwok* [1], *Chaohai Lin* [2], *Musarat Shaheen* [3]

[1] *Faculty of Education & Liberal Arts (FELA), INTI, International University, Persiaran Perdana BBN, Putra Nilai, Nilai 71800, Negeri Sembilan, Malaysia*

[2] *School of Foreign Languages, Guangdong University of Petrochemical Technology, Maoming 525011, China*

[3] *Department of Education, Bahauddin Zakariya University, Multan 60800, Pakistan*

ABSTRACT

The Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR) underscores the significance of communicative skills for language learners. The Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR), established in 2001, regulates the assessment, instruction, and acquisition of languages among global learners, thereby addressing the necessity for universal standards in foreign language education. The CEFR evaluates language learners' skill levels using a specific set of criteria and serves as a generally recognized standard for language proficiency, providing a reliable system. This study examined the influence of CEFR-aligned speaking activities on enhancing the communicative skills of Kurdish high school EFL learners in Northern Iraq. Contemporary pedagogical approaches have positioned communication competence (CC) as a pivotal element, with a significant focus on the improvement of EFL students' communicative ability in recent years. A mixed-methods study methodology was utilized, integrating quantitative and qualitative data gathering and analysis techniques. The research comprised 50 high school students divided into experimental (n = 24) and control (n = 26) groups. The post-test results indicated substantial enhancements in the communicative ability of the experimental group. Qualitative findings demonstrated that the CEFR-based materials improved learners' motivation and self- confidence in engaging and communicating in the target language. This study emphasizes sustainable development education policy improvements.

Keywords: Communicative Competence; Speaking Skills; CEFR; Motivation; Self-Confidence; Education Policy; Sustainable Development Education

*CORRESPONDING AUTHOR:

Shamim Akhter, Faculty of Education & Liberal Arts (FELA), INTI, International University, Persiaran Perdana BBN, Putra Nilai, Nilai 71800, Negeri Sembilan, Malaysia; Email: shamim.akhter@newinti.edu.my

1. Introduction

Linguistic communication serves as a means of forging connections among individuals worldwide. This is a fundamental characteristic of enhancing a nation's condition. English is considered the primary global language, employed throughout various sectors, including education, journalism, formal conferences, research and medicine, trade and industry, tourism, and the economy. It is also utilised in politics. The rapid rise of the Internet has revolutionized every field of life, and all fields, including education sectors, are enjoying its benefits [1]. Individuals with English proficiency and fluency are significant in academic and social contexts, making it imperative to employ four language skills: writing, reading, speaking, and listening. In schooling, students learn English as a second language that prioritises reading skills, which is often the main purpose of knowing the desired language [2].

The aim of any learner to learn a foreign language is to speak and communicate fluently, as communication has evolved globally to deliver and receive messages. Therefore, English is now a worldwide language; hence, speakers of many languages need to be at least competent to engage by speaking English easily. Furthermore, Mufawene [3] asserted that English has emerged as the preeminent international language, facilitating communication throughout the world. The Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) has gained significant attention regarding communicative competency with the aim of equipping language learners with improved communication skills. It is extensively utilized in establishing language proficiency, particularly for international students aspiring to secure admission to English-medium universities [4]. Moreover, CEFR has other features. For instance, Shermis [5] emphasised that the purpose of CEFR is to create a system that has similar meanings across all languages. Furthermore, Deygers et al. [6] claimed that the CEFR has potentially affected millions of lives due to its effect on language tests.

Communicative competence (CC) refers to the capacity to convey information effectively in diverse situations. It entails comprehending the language, cultural norms, and social conventions of a specific context. Moreover, it also helps to develop the capacity to articulate oneself effectively to achieve desired results. A person should exhibit all aspects of communicative competence to become a good communicator. One should be capable of utilising these characteristics in various contexts and scenarios, such as social and business circles, and communication approaches based on the formality of the setting. Communicative competence is crucial for individuals aspiring to achieve success in any given domain. It is particularly crucial for individuals with diverse origins or cultures, as it enables them to comprehend and relate with others comfortably. It can assist individuals in achieving success in various life domains. Individuals who possess it will have a competitive edge over those who lack it in job interviews or other contexts in which communication skills are crucial for success. EFL students with high communicative competency are considered affluent compared with those with inadequate communication skills.

Following the growing scale of CEFR, it has been extensively employed in European countries, owing to its comprehensiveness and empirical development. It has not only been extensively utilised by European nations for English language assessment and evaluation but has also impacted the development of educational programs in these countries [7]. A "2007 survey of Member States" indicated that CEFR was a preeminent text in language education, extensively employed, and regarded as a significant advance in curricula, instruction, and assessment [8]. Another rationale for selecting this framework is its capacity to provide a common linguistic structure, reconciling significant differences among the educational systems in Europe. Since its inception in 2001, it has been evident that its objective has been to reduce diverse difficulties in terms of better communication due to the heterogeneity of European Educational Systems. Setting shared standards to identify common objectives is challenging; consequently, the CEFR could serve as a direct solution, as it is an extensive linguistic framework reference developed in Europe and aligns with the purpose of fostering cohesion within the European Community. Moreover, it is intricately linked to the methodology formulated in Second Language Acquisition throughout Europe. Since all countries implementing CEFR in their curricula acknowledge that language teaching methodologies have been derived from this framework in the creation of language syllabuses,

curriculum guidelines, examinations, and textbooks. The CEFR has been endorsed and made accessible to the 28 EU member states of the European Union since its initial publication in 2001. The framework was subsequently translated into 40 languages and used as a reference by all the European states. In 2008, the Council of Ministers initiated the promotion of plurilingualism by urging Member States to integrate CEFR into their educational systems, adhering to the principles of fostering multilingualism and uniformity within European society, alongside the various efforts aimed at achieving this goal [9]. Nonetheless, there are other challenges associated with CEFR. This posed challenges for instructors because of the adjustment period required. A considerable distance remains before the optimal level can be achieved. User guides, such as the portfolio and advisory materials from the European Council, require modifications to enhance accessibility among various member states of the European Union. They possess alternatives to enhance the consistency of language institutions within each nation. The extent to which they choose to integrate it into their curriculum is entirely at their discretion [9]. Although different measures have been taken to attain plurilingualism and coherence [9], different approaches correspond to different language levels in CEFR, such as A1, A2, B1, B2, C1, C2, and so on. Most teachers were acquainted with non-CEFR language levels. Based on CEFR, instructors and language experts must include proven and authorised interactive teaching techniques. Can-Do descriptors address students' needs, showing the difficulty levels of the techniques and approaches at each suggested language level. It emphasises speaking techniques and approaches related to students' oral production results. In social and educational environments, they help students to improve their communication competency and performance.

The phrase communicative competence (CC) originated with Dell Hymes [10], opposing the idea of linguistic competence, which emphasised the use of grammar only. Hymes [11] asserted that language proficiency alone is insufficient for effective communication. The ability to utilise language proficiently in social and cultural contexts is as significant as understanding grammar and vocabulary. The author emphasised the importance of recognising traditions that differ between cultures in interpersonal communica-

tion. Furthermore, Hymes [11] underscored the need to consider communication from a sociolinguistic perspective. He underscored the necessity for individuals to be aware of dialects, registers, and linguistic variations that are peculiar to social groups. Considering this, individuals can effectively adjust their language utilisation to meet the requirements of diverse audiences. CC has been discussed with several academics. For example, Canale and Swain's [12] paradigm delineates four subcomponents of communicative competence: grammatical, sociolinguistic, discourse, and strategic. Substantial advancements have been achieved in the examination and instruction of CC within the domains of applied linguistics and foreign language acquisition. It initiated the development of Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) methodologies that prioritise effective communication over grammatical accuracy in foreign language instruction. Communicative proficiency remains a significant subject of enquiry in language studies. The CEFR exemplifies its impact on language education methodologies and standards.

High school education promotes English communication, while typical EFL teaching stresses grammar and rote learning. Adult and higher education have adopted the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR), but secondary education has not. There is a knowledge gap about how CEFR-based education affects younger students because current research focuses on university-level students [13,14]. Most studies examine CEFR's theoretical benefits rather than its impact on structured high school courses. This study addresses these gaps by showing how CEFR-aligned teaching techniques improve secondary EFL learners' fluency, accuracy, and confidence.

The goal of this research is to improve the communication skills of high school students by implementing a strategy that is modeled after the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR). This will be accomplished through the adoption of a strategy. One of the contributions that this study makes to the field of English for Speakers of Other Languages, generally referred to as EFL language education, is offered by this research. This is accomplished by aligning language learning strategies with the requirements that are determined by the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR), which is responsible for determining the requirements that must be met by

language learning strategies. In light of this, this provides a structured framework for improving fluency, accuracy, and confidence in communication that takes place in scenarios that are based in real life. These findings have important implications for the development of curricula and teaching techniques in the setting of classes that are dedicated to teaching English to speakers of other languages (also known as EFL).

In education, oral communication serves numerous purposes; learning to speak is the most important goal that students pursue throughout their careers. Speaking skills are seen as the fundamental ability that students use twice, in contact with writing and reading [15]. Speaking is a means of communication; it is used to convey ideas, provide justifications, transmit knowledge, and create impressions. Northern Iraq, where the first language of EFL students is Kurdish, faces difficulty in understanding a grammar-based English language instruction approach. This study aimed to solve this issue by means of effective and recommended speaking techniques to increase the CC of B1 level Kurdish EFL high school graduates.

This study aimed to address the subsequent research questions:

1. Has the implementation of CEFR-aligned activities improved students' speaking proficiency?

2. Is there a significant difference in speaking performance between the experimental and control groups?

3. What assumptions do observing teachers hold about the speaking activities?

4. What assumptions do students hold about the impact of these activities?

2. Review of Literature

While second-language speakers are not experts as native speakers, it is widely accepted that individuals can achieve native-like proficiency if they are raised in foreign-language contexts. This type of issue aligns with the communicative method linked to CC. Hymes [11] and Chomsky [16] proposed various concepts of competency. The former promotes all aspects of communication, whereas the latter focuses only on the students' linguistic proficiency. Hymes [11] prioritises CC, whereas Chomsky [16] focuses on elements of grammar. One could contend that Hymes's method for enhancing CC is rational and effective for

improving clear communication. Savignon [17] stated that Hymes's emphasis was not on language but on language as a social behaviour. Moreover, he suggested that CC coincided with Halliday's semantic potential. Savignon [17] asserted that a broader range of communicative or meaning-oriented activities increases the likelihood of engaging all learners. Consequently, Hymes' theory of CC serves as the objective of the communicative method, which seeks to become communicatively skilled in the target language as a non-native speaker [18].

Interactions between the students and their peers present significant concerns. Consequently, educators must implement interactive teaching methods that familiarise students with real- world topics. Language experience refers to the use of language to achieve real and immediate communicative goals [17]. The primary goal of language educators is to propose speaking activities and foster authentic interactions. Marzano, Pickering and Pollock [19] asserted that cooperative learning approaches enhance classroom environments by promoting learning and improving verbal skills. They help learners improve their self-esteem and social abilities. Hulstijn, Alderson and Schoonen [20] concluded that the CEFR is an effective instrument for foreign language training. They are also appropriate for teaching reasons. The CEFR's impact has been examined across Europe as well as worldwide [21].

Proficient and fluent communication in the target language necessitates real-time exposure via a set of pragmatic and effective speaking abilities. These speaking techniques must be consistent with CEFR criteria. To improve speaking skills and communicative competence, innovative and engaging learning settings must be created in which instructors and students work together to provide a secure and serene environment. CEFR-based activities characterise L2 learners' capacities in their second language across five communicative language activities, whereas instruments are developed to distinguish learner competency and facilitate communication among language practitioners [22]. The CEFR is acknowledged as an efficient language teaching system. According to Alderson, Alderson and Schoonen [20], the CEFR was meant to be thorough, clear, and cohesive in order to carry out its functions. Haynes [23] and Genesee [24] said that improved results and linguistic competency result from adequate guidance and familiarity

of language learners with the target language. Numerous studies have found that any improvement in curriculum development must include the goal of improving instructional and learning quality [25–27]. Littlewood [28] argued that the acquisition of meaning and effective communication across linguistic barriers necessitates the development of speaking techniques that can achieve specific practical outcomes. As a result, the current study demonstrates that, despite the fact that the CEFR has become an important component of foreign language teaching in European nations, instructors are still unfamiliar with it [29].

3. Research Methods

This study aimed to determine the importance of speaking skills based on CEFR. It is suggested that students enhanced their speaking abilities and communication skills by engaging in these speaking practices, which functioned as a medium for instruction. The research design was quasi-experimental, comprising an experimental and a control group. The control group adhered to the established speaking curriculum. The experimental group engaged in speaking activities for four hours of speaking classes.

The researcher developed several classroom tasks focused on communication and speaking, aligning with the CEFR guidelines. They attended four hours of speaking training and engaged in two hours of practical speaking exercises. Brown [30] argues that speaking practices should be designed to offer opportunities for discussion and interaction. Prior to the instructional process, a structured questionnaire was sent to the students to aid in the formulation of speaking practices aligned with their needs. Speaking techniques were established in accordance with the requirements of CEFR. These activities were well-suited for the B1 level; the details are given below.

1. Plans and opinions are discussed in Items 3 and 14.

2. The topics of discussion for Items 2 and 4 are activities that can be done in one's spare time.

3. Items 6 and 10 were centred on the Pros and Cons, or the Best or Worst.

4. Items 7 and 16 were centred on the concepts of agreeing and disagreeing.

5. The topics of comparison and contrast emphasise Items 11 and 18.

The design of practices, including pre-testing, instructional sessions, and post-testing, was conducted within eight weeks. The objective of this study was to improve the CC and speaking abilities of B1 level Kurdish students in a co-educational secondary school through speaking activities. It is expected that these students would be skilled in English as an EFL language. This study employed both descriptive and quantitative approaches. The study included a questionnaire, data analysis, pre-test, speaking practice for content generation, and a post-test with data analysis. The questionnaire, based on Holt and Van Duzer [31], achieved a reliability value of 0.93. The study was carried out in a secondary school with a CEFR level of B1. A mixed-mode quasi-experimental design was used to divide the experimental and control groups. The questionnaire was distributed to 100 students. The CEFR was consulted on five challenging topics concerning the improvement and advancement of spoken communication and written material. Claudia and André [32] stated that the CEFR has become an important reference source for language test creators seeking to get their exams accepted throughout Europe. A substantial majority of researchers acknowledged that it served as a foundation for test development as well as a stimulus for thought and conversation [33].

The participants were given a five-week period to receive instructions based on the developed practices. The results obtained from the questionnaires were analysed using SPSS. In the next phase, pre-test and post-test results were obtained. The pre-test was administered prior to the five-week practice, and the post-test was administered until its conclusion. During the initial phase, 100 secondary school students underwent needs analysis. The implementation phase was the second phase, which involved the execution of the speaking techniques that had been developed. The 50 students were divided into two primary groups: twenty-four students in the experimental group and twenty-six students in the control group. The participants had pursued English instruction for nine years. To enhance their English language abilities, the

participants implemented *Sunrise*, a textbook frequently implemented in northern Iraq. The Needs Analysis phase was implemented on the speaking proficiency and overall CC of the students. This was implemented to improve the reliability and validity of this phase. The study employed different instruments, such as a Needs Analysis

(NA) survey, pre-test and post-test assessments, and interviews to develop the oral abilities and performances of high school students at the B1 level. Quantitative data were collated through pre- and post-tests administered to the experimental and control groups, whereas qualitative data were collected through interviews.

The experimental group was the focus of the researcher during the experiment. This indicates that the intervention was not administered to the control group. The researcher created communication and interaction practices that students used to enhance their ability to communicate effectively. The researcher observed that the outcomes of the specified assessments stimulated Kurdish English learners to improve their communication competency and speaking skills. According to Ur [34], language students must be given the appropriate time and opportunities to engage in activities that promote their proximity to the target language.

The effectiveness of CEFR-inspired tactics in enhancing the communication skills of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) students was examined in a study that did not involve any experiments. The sixty high school students, ranging in age from 15 to 17, displayed a wide range of abilities. In the field of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) education, the experimental group utilized CEFR-based approaches, whereas the control group utilized traditional methods. Being able to join with the consent of my parents was wonderful. The collection of information: To evaluate speech both before and after the intervention, we utilized CEFR. Using student feedback and classroom observations, we investigated learning. When applied to numerical data, paired sample t-tests were used to evaluate fluency, accuracy, and confidence. It examines the impact of the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) on English language learners in high school.

4. Findings and Discussion

The need analysis questionnaire was designed to highlight the learners' shortcomings in interaction and productivity. Can-do descriptions are primarily used to address this shortcoming and help learners improve their verbal skills. All 100 high school students were categorised as B1 level; hence the NA questionnaire was employed.

Together with his English co-teachers, the researcher conducted speaking sessions for these youngsters. A five-point Likert scale was used to choose twenty items from the Can-Do claims, ranging from excessively challenging to the least difficult (no trouble). The NA Questionnaire included twenty items from the "Can Do" claims, each rated on a five-point Likert scale from too difficult to no issue or least difficult. Conversely, numbers ranging from 1 to 5 were utilised for the analysis; mean values of 2.18 to 3.20 were classified as negative, 3.20 to 3.72 as neutral, and 3.72 to 3.99 were considered as positive. 1 signifies excessive difficulty, 2 signifies considerable difficulty, 3 denotes neutrality, 4 indicates moderate difficulty; and 5 indicates no difficulty regarding the assessment criteria. The findings of the questionnaire are presented in **Table 1**.

Table 1. SPSS-based results for the questionnaire.

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
1	100	1.00	5.0	3.810	11.43
2	100	1.00	5.0	2.940	10.33
3	100	1.00	5.0	3.120	11.57
4	100	1.00	5.0	2.940	11.71
5	100	1.00	5.0	3.990	10.96
6	100	1.00	5.0	2.180	13.58
7	100	1.00	5.0	2.870	13.31
8	100	1.00	5.0	3.740	12.68
9	100	1.00	5.0	3.720	11.55
10	100	1.00	5.0	3.200	11.63
11	100	1.00	5.0	3.060	12.29
12	100	1.00	5.0	3.490	11.76
13	100	1.00	5.0	3.790	12.25
14	100	1.00	5.0	3.150	12.07
15	100	1.00	5.0	3.920	13.10
16	100	1.00	5.0	2.300	10.10
17	100	1.00	5.0	3.990	11.60
18	100	1.00	5.0	2.190	13.20
19	100	1.00	5.0	3.530	13.70
20	100	1.00	5.0	3.490	13.50
Valid N (listwise)	100				

Low mean values signify the difficulty levels of the items in the table. The approach indicated that Item 6 was recognised as the most difficult item in the questionnaire. In contrast, item 18 was designated as a secondary degree of difficulty, as evidenced by the mean value. In accord-

ance with students' needs, 10 items/subjects were selected to augment engagement and activities with the requisite production resources. Is there a noticeable difference in the advancement of the experimental and control groups following speaking activities conducted in the experimental group sessions?

Table 2 presents the pre- and post-test results for both the control and experimental groups.

Table 2. Group statistics and independent samples t-test results.

Group		N	Mean	Std. Deviation	P	Sig
Pretest	Control	26	17.04	4.33	0.01	p < 0.05
	Experimental	24	17.79	3.65		
Post-test	Control	26	16.35	4.13	0.01	p < 0.05
	Experimental	24	27.46	3.31		

Table 2 indicates that the researchers obtained remarkable results across various group levels in post-test scores after the treatment technique. The experimental group achieved a mean score of 27.46 in the post-test following the treatment, compared to a mean score of 17.79 in the pre-test prior to the treatment. Given that the p-value was below 0.05, the experimental group significantly varied from the control group. As a result, there is a significant demand among students for speaking exercises to enhance their communication and interpersonal skills. Specifically, concerning verbal skills and communicative proficiency, these activities facilitated enhancements in spoken output attributes. Students will attain English proficiency by completing this task.

This study suggests that the recommended speaking procedures used by the experimental group may greatly improve their speaking ability and communication competency. The findings of this study are consistent with previous research [35–41], which emphasises learners' reflections and responsibilities in their process of learning in order to foster individualised approaches to language acquisition; conversely, permitting students to experience autonomy and providing a student-centred classroom where the instructor acts as a facilitator and mediator would enhance their communicative proficiency. Consequently, the integration of the suggested speaking styles and a student-centred approach will yield anticipated results. Consequently, the conducted activities and the results of the post-test effectively addressed the second research question, as they markedly enhanced the development of students' speaking abilities.

There is a considerable improvement in students' fluency, accuracy, and confidence in their language skills when they receive teaching based on the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR), according to the findings of our research. This technique, which emphasizes interactive learning processes and actual language use, puts traditional approaches, which focus heavily on grammar, to the test. The classic methods are put to the test by this application.

5. Qualitative Data Assessment

Interviews with teachers and students constituted the primary source of qualitative data. The interviews influenced the outcomes of the examinations and surveys. Conversely, the researcher utilised teachers' performance evaluation forms, incorporating their comments and suggestions throughout the implementation of speaking exercises. This information elucidates the perceptions of both teachers and students regarding the speaking methods and content employed. What assumptions underlie educators' perspectives of speaking engagement?

5.1. Oral Reports

The researcher interviewed teachers with a good background in English language instruction and actively observed the phase of implementation of speaking practices. As they would have actual and useful insights into the present research, the data acquired from the teachers were highly valuable. Their responses to the interview questions and reports helped highlight the following.

5.1.1. First Teacher

The Sunrise Curriculum is the most troublesome feature of learning English. The curriculum is based on Sweden; hence, it presents challenges for Kurdish students since the Swedish and Kurdish students differ greatly. The amenities that Kurdistan offers its students fall short of their demands.

1. Another issue is that although the curriculum covers four main skills, reading and writing get the most emphasis while listening and speaking abilities get the

least priority. This results in a shortfall in students' oral production, thereby affecting their communication and interaction.

2. Since Kurdish society has generally been receptive to globalism, intellectuals and even residents now find it essential to speak in English. Most companies now demand that one should speak English, since it is a necessary language.

3. English is taught here to pass the subject and receive high grades in Grade 12. It is taught essentially to become proficient in the target language structures and conventions, and not to learn the language. They have fewer chances of speaking and a lack of drive.

4. Language learners will develop their speaking skills and communicative competency when a flawless curriculum is ready for them to concentrate mostly on oral production respect. The correct strategy, such as the communicative strategy, is required for the children because interaction and communication help them overcome the challenges.

After observatio**n,** the students lacked motivation because they were reluctant to interact and engage with their interlocutors; however, the researcher used the communicative approach to help the students discover self-confidence. Regarding the speaking exercise, students were keen to offer their opinions and ideas.

5.1.2. Second Teacher

Kurdish students struggle to express themselves because they lack understanding of the terminology and words necessary to discourse and debate on certain problems. They have challenges because they are unable to adequately express what they believe and want to communicate.

1. The majority of students worry about making mistakes. And when they make any mistake, their class fellows laugh at them. Here, the essential concern is to address the development of confidence among students.

2. Applying communicative language education and developing a curriculum that meets the requirements of the students, since students require self-confidence and a student-centred classroom atmosphere in which they may express themselves openly and without hesitation.

3. Because some English language sounds make it

difficult for Kurdish students to speak, many students have incorrect pronunciations. They should put greater emphasis on pronunciation and phonetics. Students must have access to appropriate strategies for dealing with pronunciation concerns.

4. Using the native language allows students to interact with the target language and communicate organically. Many students discussed extensively about their first language. Encouraging youngsters to speak the target language alone will be more useful.

5.2. Report after Observation

Because the students feel autonomous and do not hesitate to engage in class, a lesson plan similar to the one offered by the researcher is most suited to their requirements. Organising a fun session for the children while English was being taught helped them improve their speaking and communicative skills.

Third Teacher

1. Students do not rule the classroom; hence, some are silent or passive. Such an issue creates obstacles in language teaching and learning processes. Although greater teacher conversation deprives students of being steered towards the target language, students still need to be free without being punished and like talking in the classroom. I may claim that opportunities and interactive activities help students learn.

2. One major challenge comes from listening ability. When a native speaker listens to another speaker, students cannot grasp what they say. This is because they speak with a lot of connections. Because it will result in a better speaking output, they have fewer opportunities to listen to native speakers.

3. Tenses also represent basic issues that they cannot handle appropriately. Most students mixed up the use of tenses because they could not distinguish among the tenses. They simply learn structures to memorise their needs. On the other hand, they struggle with cohesive devices and suffer with grammar when they find themselves engaged in conversation.

4. Another issue is that given many pauses while speaking, students cannot clearly explain their views in English. Their communication breaks down and they become anxious about what they have to say. When they get

annoyed, they must utilise some of their mother tongue.

5.3. After Observation Report

The lack of real materials and topics of interest caused suffering for the students. Brandl [42] argues that by employing genuine materials, students would be focused on the real language in situations, and these so-called resources will give learners what they need. Using real materials and daily life problems connected to the interests and hobbies of students helps them become more conscious and increases their willingness to express themselves. The researcher conducted an involved and active class using what the students knew or found interesting. He could help the students express and engage with their peers and the entire class, thereby overcoming their subdued position.

Fourth Teacher

1. The learning environment is a serious concern because students receive minimal input. Students have insufficient access to the necessary educational resources. The psychological and physical states of the sessions do not always meet the students' needs for being motivated to learn the target language.

2. Even after years of studying English, these students continue to struggle to talk and engage in the target language. The lack of a curriculum that suits their needs creates both obstacles and issues. They are exclusively educated to be specialists on target language structures and rules, neglecting speech and interaction.

3. While a few of them used a communicative approach, most academics use the grammar- translation strategy. Students who are instructed in utilising the grammar-translation technique have weak communication and engagement skills, as well as an inability to convey themselves in the target language.

5.4. After Observation Report

Authenticity is the key method for engaging students in a target language. Educators must include real-world settings into their classrooms, as exemplified by the instructor, who used a variety of actual and relevant artefacts to promote improved student relationships. He understood children's needs and served as a facilitator and mediator in the classroom, primarily delivering a student-cantered curriculum. The interviews with educators, as well as their outcomes and attitudes towards the researcher's speaking practices, reveal that these activities meet the demands of the learners. They are designed to meet the needs of learners who want to improve their speaking and conversational skills. These speaking activities motivate students and raise their understanding of how to solve gaps in the development of speaking abilities and communicative competence.

The instructor's classroom teaching materials must be valid in order for students to advance and improve. Educators must add real-world situations or aspects in their teachings. Students with motivation and self-confidence have a strong desire to study and interact in the target language. However, when people are frustrated and unwilling to communicate, quiet or inactive readers arise. Harmer [43] claimed that motivating variables improved learners' efficiency and language development. As a result, there must be valid motivations for engaging in speaking activities. High schools must have excellent language instructors, particularly those who understand CEFR-based curriculum and design. The Kurdistan Region's curriculum needs significant adjustment and refinement. Therefore, a more conducive environment for teaching and learning is necessary for students to benefit effectively. What are the assumptions made by some students regarding the effects of the activities?

5.5. Oral Reports

5.5.1. First Student

To communicate effectively, most children require fluency in their speech. For me, the most challenging component of the language was achieving fluency in English, as I will enter university in the future. Given that the university curriculum is conducted in English, proficiency in the language is essential, particularly since we may seek employment after graduation. The speaking exercises were advantageous, as they eliminated reluctance and fostered a sense of autonomy in language use.

5.5.2. Second Student

We pursue education to obtain degrees and secure employment. Fluency in the English language is vital for

us, as our future careers require it. Fluency in language facilitates swift employment, whereas a deficiency in fluency may lead to complications. Upon completing this course, I believe that my proficiency in English has improved. This indicates that my capacity for interaction and communication was enhanced.

5.5.3. Third Student

In relation to other linguistic skills, I consider speaking abilities to be crucial and beneficial, as we need to communicate and engage in English until university education is complete. To achieve fluency in the English language, we regard it as our desire and aspiration to enhance our speaking skills. This training, in which we participated, significantly enhanced self- confidence and self-awareness, and facilitated the development of verbal communication skills.

5.5.4. Fourth Student

The subjects we deliberated upon in the speaking classes profoundly influenced us because of our vested interests in them. They encouraged me to have confidence in myself and to strive to engage with my classmates. Initially, I experienced trepidation and anxiety over my interactions and communication in English due to a fear of making errors and being ridiculed by my peers; nevertheless, this course has instilled resilience, determination, and encouragement in me. Proficient verbal communication is essential for me as I will require exemplary and acceptable English upon graduation and employment.

The major focus of this study is on students; hence, the researcher used a student-centred technique to create the speaking activities with them. The comments collected from the students during the interviews were useful and beneficial for this study, particularly for evaluating the qualitative data. All of the pupils interviewed exhibited a strong interest in fluency. They see this as the most difficult aspect of language development. They voiced worries about their self-confidence and self-awareness; according to the interview, the present speaking practices have increased their self-confidence and self-awareness. The participants found speaking practices inspirational and encouraging. According to Rubio[44], low self-confidence can cause inadequacies in learners' social and psychological domains, resulting in a passive trajectory in the language learning process.

English language instructors must be encouraging and helpful in order to keep pupils from becoming frustrated or anxious during classes. The Kurdistan Region's English curriculum requires extensive modification, and the teaching and learning environment must be properly arranged and enhanced. Communication competency and speaking abilities of pupils must be a top priority for well-educated and qualified language teachers. Educators must be inventive and seamless to develop novel methodologies and practices for their students.

According to Wang and Akhter[45], traditional English as a Foreign Language (EFL) instruction in high schools and universities usually relies on grammar-translation and rote memorization, both of which are methods that have the potential to hinder the capacity to communicate effectively. On the other hand, instructional methods that are based on the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) focus an emphasis on the functional use of language through the use of interactive and task-based learning. The Council of Europe, the year 2020[8] Students who were exposed to instruction that was in line with the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) had higher levels of engagement and enhanced their capacity to communicate effectively in real-world circumstances, according to the findings of this study, which provides proof of these findings.

Byram and Parmenter[13] and Matsuda[14] are two examples of studies that have been conducted in the past on the implementation of the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR). These research studies have primarily concentrated on postsecondary education. This is because the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) was developed to cater to the requirements of language learners. In order to fill a vacuum in the existing body of literature, the objective of this study is to broaden the scope of the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) and demonstrate its applicability to students in high school. Based on our findings, it appears that younger children can reap significant benefits from participating in planned communicative activities and formative evaluation processes.

The findings of Matsuda [14], who researched the influence of the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) on students as they reached the university level, are in contradiction to the findings presented here.

6. Conclusions

The English language has prompted individuals in various countries to prioritise and express interest in learning it for communication with English speakers, whether for professional reasons or social interaction. This will manifest as a requirement for language development, necessitating specialists and experienced professionals in the domain of language instruction and acquisition. This study aims to examine the prevalent issues associated with the implementation of CEFR in ESL/EFL classrooms globally, enabling stakeholders to comprehend the efficacy of CEFR utilisation and formulate corrective measures to mitigate any adverse impacts of its integration into national education systems, thereby facilitating further research. In addition to their demands, individuals encounter challenges in acquiring the target language and require specialised and scholarly methods to overcome these obstacles. Academic institutions primarily concentrate on achievements derived from various educational periods and obtain advantageous results. In the event of failure, they seek optimal solutions within their pedagogical frameworks, including the enhancement of teaching methodologies and implementation of improved practices for language development.

The researchers sought appropriate alternatives for language development to address the students' needs. They implemented exceptional tactics and strategies to enhance students' aspirations for oral spoken performance. Their objective was to enhance their speaking abilities and communicative proficiency to achieve greater competency in focused verbal communication. They devised and executed appropriate speaking activities to address learners' demands and enhance their proficiency as speakers. The seasoned educationalist, cognisant of the students' wants, utilised a questionnaire informed by his expertise in language instruction to assess and address the learners' requirements. The researcher developed a trustworthy and valid questionnaire, attributes that conferred significance to the research and the resultant findings.

The reliability of instructional resources provided by the teacher in the classroom is integral to student advancement and development. Educators must add real-world situations or aspects to their teachings. Students who are motivated and self-assured are more likely to enjoy studying and interacting in the target language. However, when people are frustrated and unwilling to communicate, quiet or inactive readers arise. Ahamat [46] argued that materials prioritise learning and teaching, exercising control over both, but O'Neill [47] claimed that they assist both learning and teaching. The Needs Analysis questionnaire was created in line with the CEFR for the B1 level to meet the needs of the students. The quantitative results from the Needs Analysis questionnaire revealed that students struggled to communicate and connect with their peers and interlocutors. In contrast, their verbal production skills were insufficient. The lack of engagement chances and realistic materials in speaking courses were the key reasons for their lethargy and ineptitude. Bowman, Burkart and Robson [48] assert that this fact is one of the reasons, stating, "traditional classroom seating arrangements often hinder your interactive teaching." The researcher was required to develop and construct proposed speaking practices to enhance learners' engagement and communication opportunities, facilitate the practice of their target language, and advance their speaking abilities and communicative competence.

The researcher facilitated a student-centred class that fostered autonomy, self-confidence, and self-esteem among students. Conversely, they were motivated, encouraged, and eager to talk and engage with their peers and interlocutors. The authors concentrated on the CEFR to address students' requirements, as the CEFR inherently emphasises communication and

interaction through its concentration on the communicative approach. The speaking activities and instructional materials employed in the speaking sessions were crucial for the students' development and success.

At the start of the research, the researcher conducted a pretest with the desired groups. An oral examination was also administered before speaking activities. This pre-test sought to assess students' proficiency prior to the implementation of the treatment. The treatment was effectively executed within five weeks, followed by a post-test. Identical questions were used in both the assessments. The post-

test findings indicated that the experimental group outperformed the control group and achieved higher scores. There was a clear difference in their levels of success. The results obtained from assessments were highly beneficial for enhancing speaking practices and understanding learners' needs for interaction, communication, and advancement of their spoken skills. The pre-test findings indicated no significant difference in the performance levels of the control and experimental groups, suggesting that they performed similarly. Conversely, while the control group attended their traditional lessons, the experimental group engaged in speaking classes immediately following the treatment, after which a post- test was administered. The sample t-test demonstrated that the experimental group surpassed the control group. They achieved higher scores compared with the control group.

The study was enhanced by acquiring quantitative and qualitative results, providing effective answers to the inadequacy of materials and the language development of learners. The instructor evaluation forms and the reports provided after each lesson were advantageous for the entire study. Students' confidence and motivation levels increased because of the approaches and practices implemented by the researcher. Conversely, the interviews with teachers and students were highly relevant, as the data provided new insights into students' levels of achievement.

Ultimately, the speaking practices and learner-centred methodology employed by the researcher facilitated the students' sense of autonomy and confidence, resulting in an enhancement of their motivation levels. The students in the experimental group exhibited substantial advancement in their speaking ability and CC. Addressing students' needs and using good speaking techniques would optimally enhance their competence and engagement, inside and outside the classroom. Overall, the use of CEFR-based practices enhances students' awareness of their speaking skills by equipping them with the language necessary to articulate their abilities [49].

To contribute to both theory and practice, the purpose of this study is to demonstrate that a strategy based on the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) is effective in an English as a Foreign Language (EFL) setting in high schools. This is the purpose of the research being conducted. The insights provided in this article can be helpful to educators and curriculum planners working toward the objective of aligning language education with internationally recognized standards of competence. This paper can be found here.

7. Limitations and Future Directions

Hesitation to participate collectively is a considerable obstacle in speaking activities, arising from their motivation and self-assurance in the classroom setting. The classroom environment posed an extra obstacle, as the classes were not organised for educational purposes. Another constraint is that involvement in the 10th, 11th, and 12th grades was considered essential, rather than just in the 11th grade, owing to the time constraints imposed by the forthcoming baccalaureate examinations in the 12th grade. Restricting the study solely to high school students poses a considerable challenge; alternatively, the objectives may be generalised across multiple high schools in this area. Future research should investigate the correlation among several linguistic competencies within the framework of significant social interaction.

Author Contributions

Conceptualization, S.A., methodology, F.T., software, S.R.S., validation, C.L. and formal analysis, M.S., investigation, S.A., resources, K.A., data curation, F.T.; writing—original draft preparation, S.R.S. All authors have read and agreed to the published version of the manuscript.

Funding

Not applicable.

Institutional Review Board Statement

Not applicable.

Informed Consent Statement

Not applicable.

Data Availability Statement

Not applicable.

Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

References

[1] Al-Assaf, K.T., Foriki, M.S.M., Samarah, T., et al., 2025. Impact of digital marketing on promoting the local pharmaceutical products in Jordan. International Review of Management and Marketing. 15(1), 137–145.

[2] Kibui, P.G., 2012. A Critique of the Contribution of Constructive Learning Approach to the Development of Critical Thinking [PhD thesis]. University of Nairobi: Nairobi, Kenya.

[3] Mufwene, S.S., 2010. Globalization, global English, and world English(es): Myths and facts. In: Coupland, N. (ed.). The Handbook of Language and Globalization. Blackwell: NJ, USA. pp. 31–55.

[4] Green, A., 2018. Linking tests of English for academic purposes to the CEFR: The score user's perspective. Language Assessment Quarterly. 15(1), 59–74. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1080/15434303.2017.1350685

[5] Shermis, M.D., 2018. Establishing a crosswalk between the Common European Framework for Languages (CEFR) and writing domains scored by automated essay scoring. Applied Measurement in Education. 31(3), 177–190. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1080/08957347.2018.1464451

[6] Deygers, B., Zeidler, B., Vilcu, D., et al., 2018. One framework to unite them all? Use of the CEFR in European university entrance policies. Language Assessment Quarterly. 15(1), 3–15. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1080/15434303.2016.1261350

[7] Alderson, J.C., 2017. Foreword to the Special Issue "The Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) for English Language Assessment in China" of Language Testing in Asia. Language Testing in Asia. 7(20), 1–9

[8] Council of Europe, 2020. Common European Framework of Reference for Languages: Learning, Teaching, Assessment – Companion Volume. Cambridge University Press: Cambridge, UK.

[9] Abidin, N.Z., Hashim, H., 2021. Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR): A review on teachers' perception & plurilingualism. Creative Education. 12, 727–736.

[10] Hymes, D.H., 1961. Functions of speech: An evolutionary approach. In: Gruber, F. (ed.). Anthropology and Education. University of Pennsylvania: Philadelphia, PA, USA.

[11] Hymes, D., 1972. On communicative competence. In: Pride, J.,Holmes, J. (eds.). Sociolinguistics. Penguin: New York, NY, USA.

[12] Canale, M., Swain, M., 1980. Theoretical bases of communicative approaches to second language teaching and testing. Applied Linguistics. 1(1), 1–47.

[13] Byram, M., Parmenter, L., 2012. The Common European Framework of Reference: The Globalisation of Language Education Policy. Multilingual Matters: Bristol, UK.

[14] Matsuda, A., 2018. Teaching English as an International Language. Oxford University Press: Oxford, UK.

[15] Rivers, W., 1981. Teaching Foreign Language Skills, 2nd ed. University of Chicago Press: Chicago, IL, USA.

[16] Chomsky, N., 1975. Reflections on Language. Pantheon: New York, NY, USA.

[17] Savignon, S.J., 2002. Communicative language teaching: Linguistic theory and classroom practice. In Savignon, S.J. (ed.). Interpreting Communicative Language Teaching: Contexts and Concerns in Teacher Education. Yale University Press: New Haven, CT, USA. pp. 1–27.

[18] Acar, A., 2005. The "communicative competence" controversy. Asian EFL Journal. 7(3), 55–60.

[19] Marzano, R.J., Pickering, D.J., Pollock, J.E., 2001. Classroom Instruction that Works, 1st ed. ASCD: Washington, D.C., USA.

[20] Hulstijn, J.H., Alderson, J.C., Schoonen, R., 2010. Developmental stages in second- language acquisition and levels of second-language proficiency: Are there links between them?. In: Bartning, I., Martin, M., Vedder, I. (eds.). Communicative Proficiency and Linguistic Development: Intersections between SLA and Language Testing Research. Eurosla Monographs: Amsterdam, the Netherlands. pp. 11–20.

[21] Díez-Bedmar, M.B., Byram, M., 2018. The current influence of the CEFR in secondary education: Teachers' perceptions. Language, Culture, and Curriculum. 2(1), 1–15. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1080/07908318.2018.1493492

[22] Harsch, C., Hartig, J., 2015. What are we aligning tests to when we report test alignment to the CEFR?. Language Assessment Quarterly. 12(4), 333–362. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1080/15434303.2015.1092545

[23] Haynes, J., 2007. Getting Started with English Language Learners: How Educators can Meet the Challenge. Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development: Washington, D.C., USA.

[24] Genesee, F., 2008. Bilingual first language acquisition: Evidence from Montreal. Diversité Urbain. Special Issue, 9–26. Available from: https://doi.org/10.7202/019559ar

[25] Abdurrahman, A., Nurulsari, N., Maulina, H., et al., 2019. Multi-level scaffolding: A novel approach of physics teacher development program for promoting

content knowledge mastery. International Journal of Innovation, Creativity and Change. 7(8), 71–89.

[26] Hartinah, S., Suharso, P., Umam, R., et al., 2020. Teacher's performance management: The role of principal's leadership, work environment and motivation in Tegal City, Indonesia. Management Science Letters. 10(1), 235–246. DOI: https://doi.org/10.5267/j.msl.2019.7.038

[27] Sriyakul, T., Rodboonsong, S., Jermsittiparsert, K., 2020. Improving quality of education: Role of human development, public spending on education and trained teachers' availability. Journal of Security and Sustainability Issues. 9(4), 1297–1307. DOI: https://doi.org/10.9770/jssi.2020.9.4(16)

[28] Littlewood, W., 1981. Communicative Language Teaching. Cambridge University Press: Cambridge, UK.

[29] Fleckenstein, J., Leucht, M., Köller, O., 2018. Teachers' judgement accuracy concerning CEFR levels of prospective university students. Language Assessment Quarterly. 15(1), 90–101. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1080/15434303.2017.1421956

[30] Brown, D.H., 2001. Teaching by principles: An interactive approach to language pedagogy. Longman: London, UK.

[31] Holt, D., Van Duzer, C., 2000. Assessing success in family literacy and adult ESL. Delta Systems & Center for Applied Linguistics: Washington, D.C., USA.

[32] Claudia, H., André, A.R., 2011. Designing and scaling level-specific writing tasks in alignment with the CEFR: A test-centered approach. Language Assessment Quarterly. 8(1), 1–33.

[33] Harsch, C., 2018. How suitable is the CEFR for setting university entrance standards?. Language Assessment Quarterly. 15(1), 102–108. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1080/15434303.2017.1420793

[34] Ur, P., 1996. A Course in Language Teaching: Practice and Theory. Cambridge University Press: Cambridge, UK.

[35] Holec, H., 1981. Autonomy and Foreign Language learning. Pergamon: Oxford, UK.

[36] Dickinson, L., 1987. Self-Instruction in Language Learning. Cambridge University Press: Cambridge, UK.

[37] Dam, L., 1995. Learner Autonomy 3: From Theory to Classroom Practice. Authentik: Ljubljana, Slovenia.

[38] Smith, R.C., 2000. Starting with ourselves: Teacher-learner autonomy in language learning. In: Sinclair, B., et al. (eds.). Learner Autonomy, Teacher Autonomy: Future Directions. Longman: London, UK. pp. 89–99.

[39] Benson, P., 2001. Teaching and Researching Autonomy in Language Learning. Longman: London, UK.

[40] Barfield, A., Brown, S.H., 2007. Reconstructing autonomy in language education: Inquiry and innovation. Palgrave Macmillan: London, UK.

[41] Murphy, L., 2008. Supporting learner autonomy: Developing practice through the Spanish production of courses for distance learners of French, German and Spanish. Language Teaching Research. 12(1), 83–102.

[42] Brandl, K., 2008. Communicative Language Teaching in Action: Putting Principles to Work. Pearson/Prentice Hall: Upper Saddle River, NJ, USA.

[43] Harmer, J., 2001. The Practice of English Language Teaching. Longman: London, UK.

[44] Rubio, F., 2007. Self-Esteem and Foreign Language Learning Introduction. Cambridge Scholars Publishing: Cambridge, UK.

[45] Wang, M., Akhter, S., 2025. Tracing interpersonal emotion regulation, behavioural emotion regulation strategies, hopelessness and vocabulary retention within Bing vs. ChatGPT environments. British Educational Research Journal. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1002/berj.4137

[46] Ahamat, M.I., 2022. Material adaptation among rural primary school English language teachers. 3L: Language, Linguistics, Literature® The Southeast Asian Journal of English Language Studies. 28(1), 90–102.

[47] O'Neill, R., 1990. Why use textbooks?. In: Rossner, R., Bolitho, R. (eds.). Currents in Language Teaching. Oxford University Press: Oxford, UK.

[48] Bowman, B., Burkart, G., Robson, B., 1989. TEFL/TESL: Teaching English as a second language. Center for Applied Linguistics: Washington, D.C., USA.

[49] Glover, P., 2011. Using CEFR level descriptors to raise university students' awareness of their speaking skills. Language Awareness. 20(2), 121–133. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1080/09658416.2011.555556