

LOCALISATION OF THE COMMON EUROPEAN
FRAMEWORK OF REFERENCE FOR LANGUAGES
WRITTEN PRODUCTION ILLUSTRATIVE
DESCRIPTOR SCALE TO MALAYSIAN HIGHER
EDUCATION CONTEXT

BY

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ABSTRACT

The Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) was introduced into the nation through the latest English in education policy reform that occurred in 2015. As the policy enactment encompasses all levels of education, the higher education sector was also affected by this reform. Consequently, all matters relating to English language education at Malaysian higher education (HE) level are to be CEFR aligned. This includes writing, the most important skill at tertiary level education. However, previous literatures have criticised CEFR for its intended European usage, European norms, and loose design allowing for differing interpretation by different users which may affect its usage at Malaysian HE level. Therefore, this research aimed at addressing these criticisms by (i) determining the CEFR's suitability, (ii) identifying fundamental elements towards localisation, and (iii) developing a framework for CEFR localisation that conforms to local context through a case study design using the tenets of Language Management Theory. This study engaged 10 participants from 6 different public universities in Malaysia. The participants were all academic staff having had experience teaching writing in English to tertiary level students. Data was collected through 4 research instruments: (i) rating sheets, (ii) rater pro forma, (iii) individual semi-structured interviews, and (iv) a semi-structured questionnaire. The gathered data were then accordingly analysed or transcribed for further analysis, and the emerging themes were categorised and discussed in detail. The findings revealed that academics at Malaysian HE level found the CEFR perplexing and have voiced concerns of its introduction. It was also revealed that academics preferred if the CEFR could be localised to local higher education context. As such, data that was acquired from the rater pro forma, as well as the semi-structured interviews provided the basis for localisation. A post localisation rating exercise demonstrated that the localised CEFR descriptor yielded better rating consistency measured through an intraclass correlation coefficient (ICC) ($ICC = .951$) in comparison to the available CEFR written production illustrative descriptor ($ICC = .747$). Additionally, the available data that was acquired also provided the basis for the conceptualisation of a localisation model that could be applied to other localisation attempts. This study also provided crucial implications for Malaysian policy makers at the supra macro planning level, as well as for those at the micro levels as the success of a language policy implementation is dependent on actors from both planning levels. Moreover, suggestions for further studies were also presented should other researchers be interested to continue with this research.

خلاصة البحث

شرعت ماليزيا عام 2015م تطبيق الإطار المرجعي الأوروبي الموحد للغات ضمن أحدث مخطط لإصلاح سياسة تعليم اللغة الإنجليزية في البلاد. وقد شمل المخطط جميع المراحل التعليمية بما فيها قطاع التعليم العالي الماليزي الذي طبق فيه ذلك الإطار في جميع مهارات اللغة الإنجليزية بما فيها مهارة الكتابة التي تُعد أهم مهارة لغوية على المستوى الجامعي. ومع ذلك، فإنَّ الدراسات السابقة انتقدت الإطار الأوروبي الموحد للغات لأنه صُمم ليناسب أوروبا، ويتبع معاييرها. وكذلك لأنَّ تصميمه مهلهل بعض الشيء، وهو ما يسمح بتفسيرات مختلفة لمحتواه حسب كل مستخدم، مما قد يؤثر على تطبيقه في قطاع التعليم العالي الماليزي. ولذلك، فإنَّ الدراسة الحالية هدفت إلى معالجة تلك الانتقادات عن طريق تحديد مدى ملاءمة الإطار المرجعي الأوروبي الموحد للغات لماليزيا، وعن طريق تحديد أهم العناصر المؤدية إلى توطينه، وعن طريق تطوير هيكل توطينه حتى يتلاءم مع السياق المحلي، وذلك من خلال إجراء دراسة حالة قائمة على أسس نظرية الإدارة اللغوية. وقد اشترك في هذه الدراسة عشرة أساتذة ينتمون إلى ست جامعات حكومية بماليزيا، ولهم خبرات طويلة في تدريس مهارة الكتابة باللغة الإنجليزية على المستوى الجامعي. قد جُمعت بيانات الدراسة عن طريق أربع وسائل، وهي: التمارين التقييمية، واستمارات التقييم، ومقابلات شبه مهيكلة، واستبانة شبه مهيكلة. وقد تمَّ تحليل البيانات بتدوينها، وتصنيفها إلى المحاور المستخلصة التي قد نوقشت بالتفصيل. وقد أظهرت نتائج الدراسة أنَّ الأكاديميين في الجامعات الماليزية يجدون أنَّ الإطار المرجعي الأوروبي الموحد للغات محير، ويفضلون تعديله ليناسب السياق الجامعي في ماليزيا. ولتحقيق ذلك التعديل، فإنَّ الباحث استخدم البيانات التي استخرجها من استمارات التقييم والمقابلات شبه المهيكلة، وتبع ذلك بتمرين تقييمي أظهرت نتائج استعماله أنَّ النسخة المعدلة من الإطار الأوروبي الموحد للغات تعطي تقييما أكثر اتساقا من حيث معامل الارتباط داخل المجموعات ($ICC = .951$) مقارنة بتقييم الإطار الأوروبي الأصلي لمهارة الكتابة ($ICC = .747$). ومن النتائج التي أفضت إليها الدراسة أيضا أن البيانات المستخرجة منها يمكن أن تشكل قاعدة تُستند إليها لاستنباط النموذج الذي يساعد على تعديل إطارات أخرى غير الإطار الأوروبي الموحد للغات، كما أنَّ للدراسة مقتضيات مهمة لصانعي القرار في ماليزيا على المستويين الأعلى والأدنى، خصوصا وأنَّ إشراك الفاعلين في كلا المستويين ضروري لضمان نجاح تطبيق السياسات اللغوية. وختاما، فإنَّ الدراسة طرحت اقتراحات لدراسات مستقبلية يمكن أن يقوم بها الباحثون المعنيون بموضوعها.

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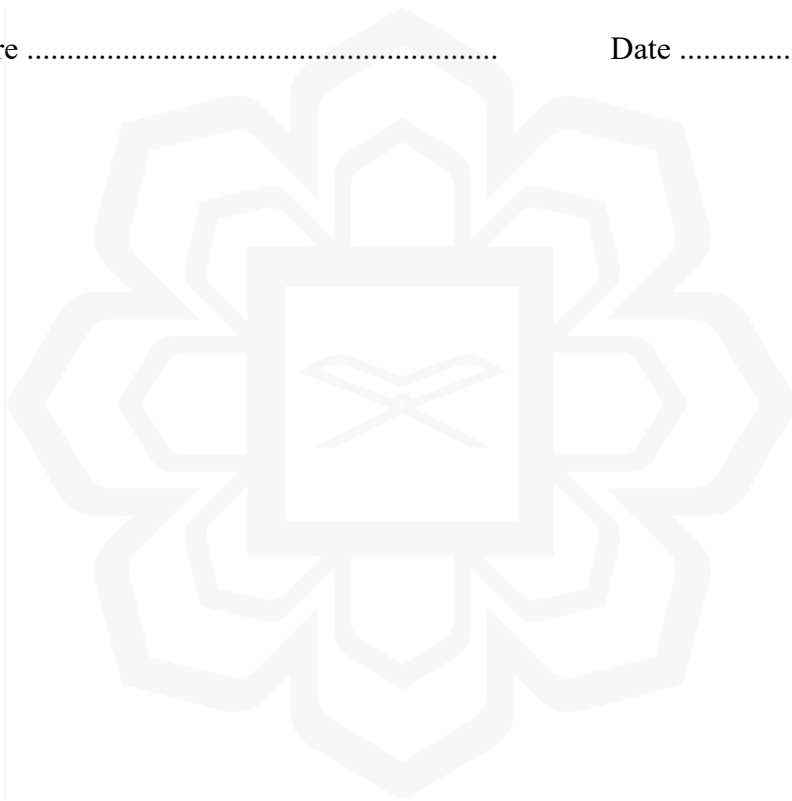
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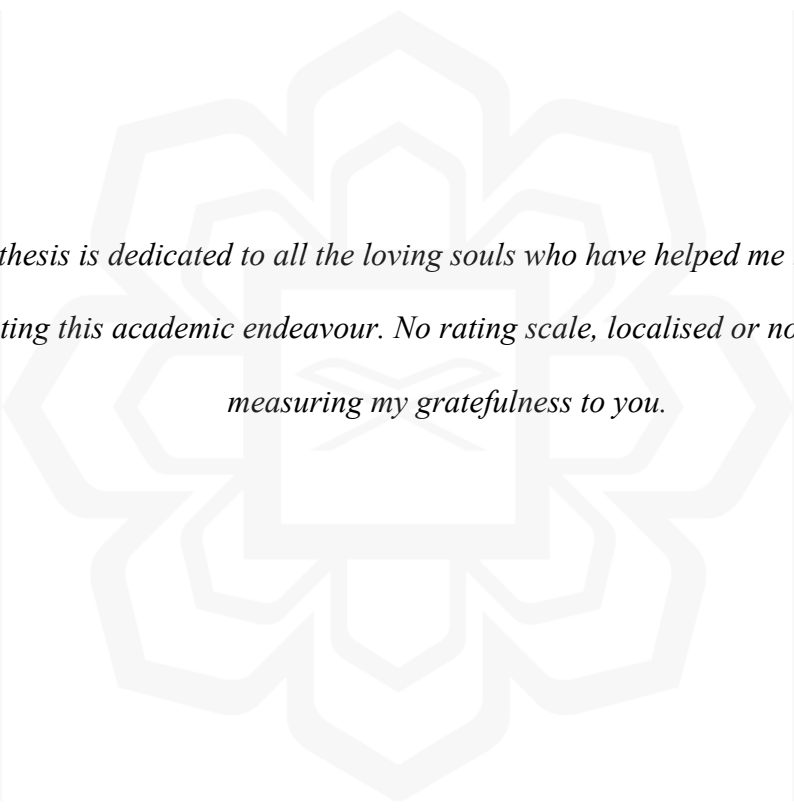
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This thesis is dedicated to all the loving souls who have helped me immensely in completing this academic endeavour. No rating scale, localised or not, is capable of measuring my gratefulness to you.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AYLLIT	Assessment of Young Learner Literacy, linked to the CEFR
CAQDAS	Computer-assisted qualitative data analysis software
CECR	College English Curriculum Requirements
CEF	Common European Framework of Reference for Languages
CEFR	Common European Framework of Reference for Languages
CEFR-J	Common European Framework of Reference for Languages - Japan
CEFR-M	Common European Framework of Reference for Languages - Malaysia
CEFR-V	Common European Framework of Reference for Languages - Vietnam
CEFRL	Common European Framework of Reference for Languages
CLO	Content, Language, Organisation
DU	Discourse Unit
ELSQC	English Language Standards and Quality Council
ELTS	English Language Test Service
ESOL	English to Speakers of Other Languages
GeR	Gemeinsamer europäischer Referenzrahmen für Sprachen
GeRS	Gemeinsamer europäischer Referenzrahmen für Sprachen
HEI	Higher Educational Institution
ICC	Intraclass Correlation Coefficient
ID	Identification
IELTS	International English Language Testing System
L2	Second Language
LMT	Language Management Theory
MCER	Marco Común Europeo de Referencia para los Idiomas
MCO	Movement Control Order
MEB	Malaysian Education Blueprint
MEXT	Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology
MOHE	Ministry of Higher Education
MUET	Malaysian University English Test
PPSMI	Teaching of Science and Mathematics in English
QCER	Quadro comune di riferimento per la conoscenza delle lingue
RQ	Research Question
SLS	Sociolinguistic situation
SLS1	Sociolinguistic situation (initial)
SLS2	Sociolinguistic situation (expected outcome)
SME	Standard Malaysian English
SPM	Sijil Pelajaran Malaysia
SPSS	Statistical Package for the Social Sciences
TEM	Test for English Majors
TOEFL	Test of English as a Foreign Language
UBA	Bahtera University
UBE	Bendahara University
UiTM	Universiti Teknologi Mara
UK	United Kingdom
UL	Laksamana University
UM	Universiti Malaya

UN Nakhoda University
UP Panglima University
US United States of America
UT Temenggung University



CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

Since gaining her independence in 1947, Malaysia has seen a continuous stream of educational policy reforms. These reforms are chiefly noticeable in the medium of instruction used in educational institutions in Malaysia from primary level to tertiary level education (a further discussion of the language in education policy will be made in Section 2.2 of this thesis). In 2015, the nation once again went through a language in education reform, and it was at this stage that Malaysia embraced the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages as its basis for the reformulation of language education in the country.

The Common European Framework of Reference for Languages, also known as CEFR, was developed by the Council of Europe in 2001 with the aim to unite Europe through a plurilingual culture (a detailed elaboration of CEFR will be provided in Section 2.3 of this thesis). Although the CEFR was originally developed for use in the European regions, many nations around the world have recognised it and adopted the language framework in its educational language policy. Having reformed its English language in education policy, as stated above, Malaysia has also not fallen short of adopting the CEFR and has progressively integrated the CEFR into the English language curriculum at its primary, secondary, and tertiary level education. Eventually, language assessments in Malaysia will also have its results pegged against the CEFR (Malaysian Examinations Council, 2019).

In response to the introduction of the CEFR into the Malaysian educational scenario, this study is interested in examining the viability of the published CEFR written production illustrative descriptor scale from a Malaysian higher education perspective. In addition, the study also aims to investigate whether localisation of the associated illustrative descriptor scale is necessary in local context. The concept of localisation in this study will refer to the adaptation of the CEFR written production illustrative descriptor contents to English language conventions in Malaysian higher