

# Factors Influencing Acceptance of CEFR-Aligned English Language Curriculum at a Malaysian University

## ABSTRACT

**Authors:** Muhammad Fazli Abdullah<sup>1,2</sup>, Fazilah Razali<sup>1\*</sup> and Farah Aida Fadzil<sup>1,2</sup>

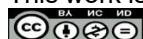
**Affiliation:** <sup>1</sup>Faculty of Educational Studies, Universiti Putra Malaysia, 43400 Serdang, Selangor, Malaysia.

<sup>2</sup>School of Liberal Studies, Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia, 43600 Bangi, Selangor, Malaysia

\*Corresponding author:  
[fazilahrazali@upm.edu.my](mailto:fazilahrazali@upm.edu.my)

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The lack of studies evaluating CEFR-aligned English language curricula implemented in Malaysia is a serious concern impacting students' language learning environment. This issue becomes increasingly worrying in higher education because of the lack of curriculum standardization across various higher educational institutions. As students are the direct recipients of the implemented English curriculum, this study aimed to explore factors that influence university students' curriculum acceptance by examining their attitude, speaking anxiety, and remote learning readiness. It utilized a quantitative correlational design by distributing a validated and reliable cross-sectional survey to 405 undergraduate students at a Malaysian public university that recently underwent CEFR-aligned curriculum restructuring. Pearson's correlation tests and multiple linear regression analyses were conducted to examine the relationships between variables and determine their predicting effects. Findings indicated that students' attitude ( $r=0.73$ ) and remote learning readiness ( $r=0.67$ ) are significant predictors of curriculum acceptance. The regression model is statistically significant and has a strong model fit ( $R^2=0.60$ ). These findings provide crucial students' perspectives for curriculum revisions and better implementation of the CEFR-framework in Malaysia. Insights from the study are applicable to CEFR-alignment policies, curriculum design, teaching, and assessment practices done in other ESL/EFL (English as a second/foreign language) countries around the world.

**Keywords:** CEFR evaluation, CIPP, curriculum evaluation, English language curriculum, student acceptance

## 1. Introduction

The English Language Education Reform: The Roadmap 2015-2025 is an integral English language education policy in Malaysia, and its principal component is the integration of Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) into English language curricula across various education levels. This is due to the need for higher English language proficiency among Malaysian students especially in the highly competitive global market (Savski, 2021). The CEFR framework provides comprehensive guidelines in informing language learning, teaching, and assessment practices by providing detailed insights on communicative language activities, strategies, and competences.

The alignment of teaching and assessment practices to these CEFR guidelines has become a key component in English language teaching (ELT) practices in many countries worldwide. In Malaysia, the CEFR-aligned Standards-Based English Language Curriculum (SBELC) was introduced at primary and secondary schools across the country (Musa et al., 2021). This was followed by the development of CEFR-aligned textbooks, teaching materials, and national examinations (Zaki, 2021; Alias et al., 2021; Baharum et al., 2021). On a more global scale, the CEFR alignment efforts were seen in various forms like the integration into the national curriculum in Thailand (Chartrakul & Damnet, 2021), the development of students' 21st-century skills through curriculum design and assessment in Indonesia (Miqawati et al., 2023), and its application in shifting towards communicative language teaching in Finland and Poland (Aribaş, 2021). These examples demonstrate the large-scale adoption of the CEFR framework in numerous ELT practices around the world.

Despite the widespread implementation of the CEFR framework in English language education, its effectiveness is rarely examined through systematic evaluation, particularly at the higher education level (Sahib & Stapa, 2021). While CEFR alignment aims to improve the quality of language education, many initiatives were implemented without robust mechanisms to assess their impacts on teaching, learning, and assessment practices. As Nurhayati (2024) notes, continuous monitoring and evaluation are essential for identifying strengths and weaknesses and for improving educational reforms. However, existing CEFR initiatives often lack structured evaluative frameworks that meaningfully involve key stakeholders, despite evidence that stakeholder engagement is critical for informed policy formulation and evaluation (Sharma & Kumar, 2023). While there are existing previous CEFR-related studies from school administrators' and teachers' perspectives, students' experiences and reception towards this curricular reform remain underexplored (Jamain, 2023).

This absence represents a significant evaluative gap in the current English language education reform in higher education. Addressing this gap through systematic curriculum evaluation is essential to ascertain the language education policy effectiveness and to support the success of CEFR-aligned reforms in higher education. Moreover, post COVID-19 pedagogical issues which significantly impacted students' cognition, behavior, and their learning environment make this curriculum evaluative gap even more critical. Concerns over increased anxiety level in CEFR-aligned speaking assessments, consistently high speaking anxiety during online learning, and the pressure of adapting to online English language classes among students may affect their attitude towards English language learning and their engagement with the CEFR-aligned curriculum implemented (Zulkflee et al., 2023; Zulkiflee & Nimehchisalem, 2022; Mahmud & Mahmud, 2023; Ahmed et al., 2021). Therefore, to address the stated issues, the study aims:

1. To determine the relationship between university learners' attitude and their acceptance of CEFR-aligned English Language Curriculum
2. To determine the relationship between university learners' speaking anxiety and their acceptance of CEFR-aligned English Language Curriculum
3. To determine the relationship between university learners' remote learning readiness and their acceptance of CEFR-aligned English Language Curriculum
4. To determine the dominant predictor—among attitude, speaking anxiety, and remote learning readiness—of university learners' acceptance of a CEFR-aligned English language curriculum

Expanding on earlier CEFR studies in university contexts (Ng & Ahmad, 2021; Nawawi et al., 2021; Uri & Aziz, 2024), this study bridges the gap between school-based and higher education CEFR implementations. While previous Malaysian evaluations centered on secondary levels and teacher readiness (Uri & Aziz, 2018; Uri & Aziz, 2020; Ibrahim et al., 2023), this research extends the scope by sampling undergraduates and evaluating curriculum acceptance through online delivery. The focus on digital modality aligns with current technology-integration literature regarding curriculum adoption and learner experience (Mohammed et al., 2021; Fahrughazi et al., 2022; CH'NG et al., 2024). Hence, incorporating remote learning readiness serves as a meaningful extension of existing studies in the field. Crucially, this study addresses a distinct gap in the literature as no prior study has simultaneously examined attitude, speaking anxiety, and remote learning readiness as joint predictors of CEFR curriculum acceptance. By synthesizing these specific variables within the Malaysian higher education context, this study provides an original empirical framework that transcends the singular focus of previous research. It directly addresses a critical gap in Malaysian higher education research that has formerly focused on structural rather than affective or modality-specific factors (Uri & Aziz, 2018; Foley, 2019; CH'NG et al., 2024).

Learner attitude is included due to its strong correlation with oral performance and engagement in CEFR-aligned contexts (Wong & Ismail, 2023; Stognieva & Popov, 2021; Chou, 2018), while speaking anxiety acts as a proximal risk factor that specifically hinders communicative task uptake in online delivery modes (Mahmud & Mahmud, 2023; Teoh & Liao, 2021). Remote-learning readiness explains the practical capacity such as digital literacy and self-regulation which are required to navigate the shift toward online CEFR instruction, a determinant of perceived usefulness and success in contemporary programs (Almazroui & Alkaabi, 2022; Azarfam, 2022; Hermanto, 2015; Muttaqin & Ida, 2015). By synthesizing these three variables, the study examines whether acceptance is driven by internal dispositions or external technological readiness, aligning with recent literature that underscores the intersection of affect and technology in predicting students' curriculum acceptance (Marzaini & Yusoff, 2022). Theoretical implications of the study include contextual application of both the Social-Cognitive learning theory (Bandura, 1974) and curriculum evaluation model (Stufflebeam, 1971) by highlighting the crucial role of students as curriculum recipients in influencing CEFR-aligned curriculum acceptance. The study has crucial institutional and pedagogical implications as it enables curriculum leaders to make evidence-based curriculum development and design decisions (Legak and Wahi, 2020; Ramulumo, 2023). Overall, this study contributes to more effective student-centred and context-specific CEFR framework adoption in the global English language education.

## 2. Literature Review

### 2.1. Attitude in Acceptance of English Language Curriculum

Attitude refers to “a feeling or opinion one has about something and most often is reflected in one's behavior towards a construct. It often involves feelings and belief systems and the disposition to behave in each way” (Jamshed et al., 2023). Attitude is a key factor driving students' motivation and positive attitudes are often associated with increased classroom participation (Mumba, 2024). This is supported by Ismaili (2021) which claimed that attitude towards learning is a significant influencing factor in students' classroom engagement and overall success of English language acquisition. Aldujayn and Alsubhi (2020) stated that students' attitudes toward online language classes were found to be significantly affected by the usability and accessibility of the online learning platforms. Moreover, social factors such as the absence of peer interaction negatively affected students' attitude, leading to the lack of students' focus during online classes (Mukhtar et al., 2020). These studies demonstrated the sensitive nature of students' attitude which can either influence or be affected by various internal and external factors. Therefore, based on Bandura's (1974) Social Cognitive Theory, university learners' cognitive learning factor was operationalized as learners' attitude and the first hypothesis was developed.

H<sub>1</sub>: There is a significant relationship between university students' attitude and their acceptance of CEFR-aligned English Language Curriculum.

## 2.2. Speaking Anxiety in Acceptance of English Language Curriculum

Speaking anxiety is “a major barrier to students' willingness to communicate” (Alaqeel & Altalhab, 2024), and it is a common issue that affects English language learners. The prevalence of speaking anxiety among students is still very high across many different contexts. This issue is not limited to only learners with low English language proficiency as even students with high language proficiency experience speaking anxiety (Hasibuan & Irzawati, 2020). The debilitating effects that speaking anxiety have towards learners and their learning experiences are well-documented in the literature. Dong (2023) found that there is a negative correlation between speaking anxiety and learners' self-efficacy. This implies that the probability of learners who demonstrate high levels of anxiety to engage in speaking activities is significantly lower, depriving them of speaking opportunities and hindering their English language acquisition (Dong, 2023). This finding is supported by Grieve et al. (2021) who found that learners' fears towards oral presentations and public speaking often disrupted their language learning experiences which resulted in speaking avoidance behaviors such as refraining from practicing their speaking skills. These mental and behavioral setbacks trap learners into a perpetual vicious cycle where anxiety hinders language practice, which then amplifies the speaking anxiety even further.

However, the context in which communication occurs is a key factor in managing this cycle. Research comparing speaking anxiety in online contexts versus face-to-face context has frequently indicated that comparably lower levels of apprehension were elicited by online environments (Rahmi & Murtafi'ah, 2022; Emara, 2025; Cheng & Sun, 2025). Studies involving English as a Foreign Language (EFL) echo this as synchronous voice-based and online speaking tasks repeatedly resulted in reduced anxiety and enhanced performance in comparison to traditional in-person interactions (Rahmi & Murtafi'ah, 2022; Bárkányi & Brash, 2025; Chew & Chen, 2021). However, these findings are nuanced and can be conflicting due to influential factors such as social presence and modality. While a virtual space tends to alleviate anxiety, a virtual audience can raise stress levels similar to levels in a physical classroom (Moïse-Richard et al., 2021). Drawing on Bandura's (1974) Social Cognitive Theory, which underscores the triadic reciprocal interaction between personal, environmental, and behavioural factors, university learners' behavioral learning factor was operationalized as learners' speaking anxiety and the second hypothesis was developed.

H<sub>2</sub>: There is a significant relationship between university students' speaking anxiety and their acceptance of CEFR-aligned English Language Curriculum.

## 2.3. Remote Learning Readiness in Acceptance of English Language Curriculum

Remote learning readiness is the students' ability to “adapt their learning approaches rapidly to suit the needs of a virtual learning environment” (Tan et al., 2023). Following the COVID-19 pandemic, the global educational landscape drastically shifted in favor of remote learning over traditional physical classrooms. One of the most notable issues with remote learning is decreased motivation level and lower classroom participation among students. These could be attributed to technological issues such as internet connection and availability of electronic devices and the absence of social interactions between peers (Slykerman et al., 2022). Another study reported similar findings where it was argued that remote learning lacks the social proximity that is characteristic of traditional learning environments where students have face-to-face interactions in the classroom (Ceballos et al., 2021). Additionally, students can get direct support from teachers in the typical physical learning setting, but in remote learning settings, such physical support is essentially non-existent which leads to compromised learning experiences (Abuhammad, 2020). These potential adverse effects of remote learning towards students' language experiences must be addressed so that effective English language learning can still occur even

in an online environment. Therefore, based on Bandura's (1974) Social Cognitive Theory, university learners' environmental learning factor was operationalized as learners' remote learning readiness and the third hypothesis was developed.

H<sub>3</sub>: There is a significant relationship between university students' remote learning readiness and their acceptance of CEFR-aligned English Language Curriculum.

## 2.4. Curriculum Acceptance of English Language Curriculum

Curriculum acceptance refers to "the views of all students who are still going through and have gone through this program" (Kalkan & Genç, 2023). The theoretical underpinning of students' curriculum acceptance is the CIPP (context, input, process, product) model of curriculum evaluation proposed by Daniel L. Stufflebeam in 1971. The CIPP model was adopted in this study due to its systematic approach to curriculum evaluation where language educators can gain insights into the students' reception towards the implemented CEFR-aligned English language curriculum at the university. Many previous studies also utilized the model in different contexts such as the evaluation of football school curriculum (Nugraha, 2022) and early childhood education during the COVID-19 pandemic (Suryana, 2023). In English Language Teaching (ELT), the model was also utilized extensively in evaluating effectiveness of language curricula such as identifying specific weaknesses (Manan et al., 2020; Yaşıtbaş & Kavgacı, 2020) and evaluating instructional alignment and student satisfaction (Tunç, 2010; Ulum, 2016). Collectively, these literatures affirm the CIPP model's suitability and universality to be used in different contexts, including the evaluation of CEFR-aligned English language curriculum carried out in this study.

The first component of the CIPP model is the context evaluation which explores the perceived curriculum relevance and allows educators to measure how well learners' expectations and personal learning goals are aligned with the implemented curriculum (Asiandrayani et al., 2021). Learners' attitude influences their acceptance of the curriculum context which is reflected in their perceptions towards the curriculum relevance, value, and appropriateness. Secondly, the input evaluation explores the perceived effectiveness of instructional materials and overall teaching approach employed by examining its adequacy, availability, and usefulness for learning purposes (Kang & Xu, 2024). Additionally, learners' remote learning readiness shapes their acceptance of the curriculum input because readiness allows learners to actively utilize audiovisual aids and online learning resources provided.

Next, the process evaluation explores the actual implementation of the curriculum, i.e. the teaching and learning process which allows educators to capture learners' experiences and reactions to the curriculum (Omid et al., 2020). Learners' speaking anxiety affects their acceptance of the curriculum process which is reflected in their participation in classroom activities and interaction with teachers and peers. Finally, the product evaluation explores the perceived educational effectiveness and attainment of learning outcomes as well as students' satisfaction level towards it (Indriyana et al., 2024). Collectively, these learner factors indirectly influence their acceptance of the curriculum product which is the overall perceived effectiveness of the CEFR-aligned curriculum implemented at the university.

Prior CEFR-related studies in Malaysia have highlighted notable tensions and gaps pertaining to stakeholder perceptions and curriculum implementations. A study that involved teachers as a key educational stakeholder established generally negative perceptions from teachers towards the CEFR framework (Nawawi et al., 2021). Policy-reality inconsistencies were discovered as teachers reported insufficient CEFR training and understanding which affected the process of CEFR implementation (Abidin & Hashim, 2021). These tensions were further amplified as Shak et al. (2021) questioned the suitability of imported CEFR-aligned English textbooks that are not culturally relevant for Malaysian students. Ironically, although many empirical studies had highlighted the urgent need for teachers'

professional development courses on the CEFR framework, intervention strategies by local educational leaders remained limited (Jamain & Jamaludin, 2023).

For instance, Samad and Haron (2021) found that despite some training on CEFR-aligned formative assessment methods, actual applications of those approaches in classroom practices were still low. This also demonstrates another significant gap which is difficulty aligning CEFR-aligned curriculum with classroom practices, evident in multiple prior studies. Zaki and Darmi (2021) claimed that many aspects of the curriculum developed using the CEFR framework were inadequately articulated or implemented in practice such as CEFR-based proficiency level measurement inconsistencies in universities (Baharum et al., 2021) as well as teacher-administered CEFR-Readiness Test design limitations (Marzaini & Yusoff, 2022). Trickleing down to curriculum recipients, these gaps were further reflected in students' learning experiences where CEFR-aligned speaking and writing tests presented setbacks such as barriers to higher language proficiency and psychological anxiety impacting effective learning (Ch'ng et al., 2024; Che Nor & Md Yunus, 2022). In summary, these studies highlight the crucial mismatch between policy aims for international standardizations and complex realities of the local Malaysian educational landscape. Therefore, based on Stufflebeam's (1971) CIPP model of curriculum evaluation, university learners' curriculum acceptance was operationalized, and the fourth hypothesis was developed.

H<sub>4</sub>: There is a significantly dominant predictor—among attitude, speaking anxiety, and remote learning readiness—of university students' acceptance of CEFR-aligned English Language Curriculum.

## 2.5. Framework of the Study

The theoretical underpinning of this study is Bandura's (1974) Social Cognitive Theory where university learners' cognitive, behavioral, and environmental factors were examined as independent variables of the study which are attitude, speaking anxiety, and remote learning, respectively. These three independent variables were hypothesized to directly affect the dependent variable which is the students' acceptance of the CEFR-aligned English language curriculum. Further detailing the main constructs; Attitude was measured through cognitive attitude and emotional attitude sub-constructs; Speaking anxiety was measured through the sub-construct of interpersonal anxiety; Remote learning readiness was measured through self-directed learning and computer & internet efficacy sub-constructs. On the other hand, curriculum acceptance was measured through four sub-constructs of CIPP model of curriculum evaluation by Stufflebeam (1971) which are context, input, process, and product evaluations. Examining all these variables allow factors that affect university learners' learning predispositions to be measured and correlated against the level of their CEFR-aligned English language curriculum acceptance. The conceptual framework acts as guiding anchor of the study and allows the relationships between these variables to be analyzed and established clearly throughout the study period. The conceptual framework of this study is illustrated in Figure 1.

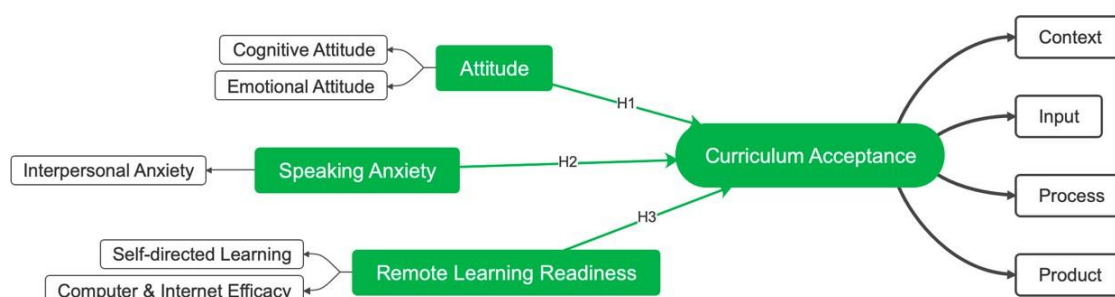


Figure 1. Conceptual Framework of Study

### 3. Methodology

The study employed a correlational research design which examined the relationships between attitude, speaking anxiety, remote learning readiness and curriculum acceptance. This cross-sectional survey was conducted at a public university in the Bangi district of Selangor, Malaysia. The selection of the university as the study location is because of its recent English language curriculum CEFR-aligned restructuring by adopting the ADDIE model (Musa et al., 2021). However, design limitations were therefore indicated; the cross-sectional design suggests that causal relationships between the variables must not be inferred and the study focus on a single higher education institution suggests that results should be interpreted with caution when generalizing to other populations or settings. Additionally, this study evaluated student acceptance instead of academic performance as it focuses on how the implemented CEFR-aligned curriculum influences students' learning experiences and their perceived curriculum effectiveness rather than evaluating performance measures. This study has obtained both the ethical approval from the Ethics Committee for Research Involving Human (JKEUPM) with reference number UPM.TNCPI.800-2/1/7 and voluntary informed consents from the participants.

#### 3.1. Sampling

The study population is comprised of undergraduate students at the university. The study employed a two-step sampling method which entails purposive sampling followed by random sampling. First, the sampling frame was defined based on the inclusion criteria which is their enrolment in offered English courses, and it was obtained from the university's administration office. Based on the name lists of registered students, there is an estimated 5,705 total number of undergraduate students enrolled in English courses in semester 1. Based on this population size, estimated sample size in this study was determined by using Cohen's (1988) guidelines which stated that to detect a small effect size of 0.20 with 0.8 statistical power in a two-tailed correlation test at 0.05 significance level, an estimated minimum of 393 number of participants are required to be recruited in the study. This first sampling stage ensured that the participants have experienced the CEFR-aligned English language curriculum for at least one semester of English language learning at the university, and they can therefore provide relevant insights and feedback on the curriculum.

Following that, subject recruitment was done by randomly distributing the survey questionnaire to respondents at the end of semester 1 2024-2025 in January 2025 via their respective English language instructors. This approach leverages established instructor-student relationships (Nawai & Said, 2020) and allows the reaching of larger audience and higher response rates. A total of 600 students from all faculties across 20 class sections were invited to participate and 413 responses were completed, resulting in a response rate of 68.8% that met the predetermined minimum estimated sample size for correlation analyses. From 413 responses, 1 response was excluded due to the lack of informed consent, and 7 responses were removed as they were identified as outliers during the preliminary data cleaning stage, making the final number of responses analyzed to be 405 (n=405). By employing this two-step sampling method, only participants who have directly experienced the CEFR-aligned curriculum at the university were considered for selection and then selected, ensuring both contextually and statistically accurate procedure for data collection.

#### 3.2. Instrumentation

The instrument employed in this study is a survey questionnaire that was adopted and adapted from previous studies. It comprises 68 items, each rated on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 'Strongly Disagree' to 'Strongly Agree'. A 5-point scale was selected to minimize respondent fatigue and ensure clarity, as fewer response options can reduce the cognitive burden associated with complex decision-making (Aybek & Toraman, 2022). Demographic information, including respondents' faculty, MUET level, number of English courses completed, and year of study was collected and a mapping table

illustrating and linking each main construct to its source instrument and subscales is provided in Table 1.

Table 1. Construct-Instrument Mapping

Construct	Source	Sub-construct
Attitude →	Jamshed et al. (2023) →	Cognitive & Emotional (14 items)
Remote Learning Readiness →	Tan et al. (2023) →	Self-Directed Learning & Computer/Internet Efficacy (12 items)
Speaking Anxiety →	Alaqael & Altalhab (2024) →	Interpersonal Anxiety (12 items)
Curriculum Acceptance →	Kalkan & Genç (2023) →	Context, Input, Process, Product (30 items)

### 3.3. Data Collection and Analysis

The content validity of the instrument was established by a panel of two subject matter experts, selected for their specialized expertise in the CEFR framework and the Malaysian higher education context. While larger panels were often discussed in psychometric literature, this study followed the evidence-based guidelines provided by Yusoff (2019), which established that a minimum of two experts is acceptable for content validation provided the Content Validity Index (CVI) meets a higher threshold of at least 0.80. The appointed experts reviewed the items on a 4-point scale of relevance, from which the CVI was calculated. In this study, both the S-CVI/Ave (scale-level content validity index based on the average method) and S-CVI/UA (scale-level content validity index based on the universal agreement method) validity indices were 1.0. This result indicates excellent validity and universal agreement across all survey items, exceeding the recommended thresholds for a two-expert panel.

Table 2. Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) test and Bartlett's test of sphericity

Construct	KMO	Bartlett	Component	Initial Eigenvalues	
				Total	% of Variance
Attitude	.92	<.001	1	6.09	43.94
			2	1.21	8.65
Remote Learning Readiness	.89	<.001	1	5.77	48.10
			2	1.36	11.29
Speaking Anxiety	.95	<.001	1	7.62	63.47
Curriculum Acceptance	.97	<.001	1	17.69	58.95
			2	1.56	5.19
			3	.94	3.13
			4	.88	2.92

Table 3. Factor Loadings

Attitude				
Item	Component 1	Component 2	Component 3	Component 4
A1		.78		
A2		.71		
A3		.63		
A4		.45		
A5		.49		
A6		.61		
A7		.45		

A8	.53			
A9	.65			
A10	.55			
A11	.93			
A12	.87			
A13	.62			
A14	.41			
<b>Remote Learning Readiness</b>				
RLR1		.51		
RLR2		.42		
RLR3		.81		
RLR4		.56		
RLR5		.79		
RLR6		.55		
RLR7	.52			
RLR8	.90			
RLR9	.90			
RLR10	.87			
RLR11	.76			
RLR12	.72			
<b>Speaking Anxiety</b>				
SA1	.76			
SA2	.79			
SA3	.80			
SA4	.88			
SA5	.87			
SA6	.81			
SA7	.84			
SA8	.76			
SA9	.84			
SA10	.68			
SA11	.77			
SA12	.75			
<b>Curriculum Acceptance</b>				
CA1				.74
CA2				.77
CA3				.48
CA4				.63
CA5				.79
CA6		.75		
CA7		.77		
CA8		.61		
CA9		.78		
CA10		.79		
CA11		.5		
CA12			.42	
CA13			.49	
CA14			.64	
CA15			.66	
CA16			.46	
CA17			.57	
CA18	.47			
CA19	.51			
CA20	.49			
CA21	.51			

CA22	.61			
CA23	.64			
CA24	.86			
CA25	.86			
CA26	.83			
CA27	.85			
CA28	.82			
CA29	.80			
CA30	.72			

To establish the construct validity of the instrument, exploratory factor analysis (EFA) using the Principal Component Axis (PCA) extraction method with Direct Oblimin rotation on each multi-item construct was conducted. Prior to that, suitability of the factor analysis was confirmed through the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) test and Bartlett's test of sphericity. The results in Table 2 confirmed the suitability of factor analysis as the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin measure verified the sampling adequacy which ranged from .89 to .97 and there was a significant difference in the Bartlett's test ( $<.01$ ), both meeting the recommended statistical thresholds (Hair et al., 2019). Subsequently, results from the factor analysis in Table 3 showed that all construct items loaded significantly ( $>.40$ ) on their respective factors which confirmed the subscale structures (Hair et al., 2019).

The instrument's reliability was established by conducting a pilot study involving 30 students from the population which yielded Cronbach's alpha values of .7 for both attitude and remote learning readiness constructs and .9 for both speaking anxiety and curriculum acceptance constructs, both indicating acceptable and excellent reliability of items, respectively (Mohd Arof et al., 2018). IBM Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) software was utilized to analyze data in this study due to its ability to handle complex statistical tests such as descriptive statistics and correlation analyses. Prior to conducting the statistical tests, the possibility of common method bias introduced in a single self-reported survey was addressed by conducting a Harman's single-factor test. The results confirmed that common method biases such as social desirability and acquiescence did not pose a significant threat to the validity of this study's findings because the first factor accounted for only 37.52% of the variance, which is well below the accepted threshold of 50% (Podsakoff et al., 2003).

Following that, data was further analyzed by conducting descriptive analysis to provide a general pattern of the collected data by reporting the mean scores and standard deviations along with its interpretations based on guidelines by Zaki & Ahmad (2017). Then, correlation analyses via Pearson's test and multiple linear regression were conducted to determine the relationships and the predicting effects of the independent variables towards the dependent variable. The strength of the Pearson's correlation coefficients was then interpreted based on guidelines by Cohen (1988). While composite Likert scores utilized in this study contain inherent measurement error, multiple linear regression was chosen over more advanced modeling approaches like structural equation modeling (SEM) due to its practical interpretability as its clear and interpretable coefficients are more applicable for broader educational policy and curricular decision-making.

## 4. Findings

### 4.1. Descriptive Analysis of Variables

Table 4. Summary of the Respondents' Demographic Information

		Frequency( <i>f</i> )	Percentage (%)
Faculty	FEP	13	3.2
	FFAR	5	1.2
	FKAB	52	12.8
	FGG	20	4.9

	FPEND	7	1.7
	FPER	23	5.7
	FPI	100	24.7
	FSK	34	8.4
	FSSK	1	.2
	FST	146	36.0
	FUU	3	.7
	CITRA	1	.2
<b>MUET level</b>	2 to 2.5	5	1.2
	3 to 3.5	197	48.6
	4 to 4.5	199	49.1
	5 to 5+	4	1.0
<b>Year of Study</b>	First year	165	40.7
	Second year	179	44.2
	Third year	42	10.4
	Fourth year	19	4.7
<b>Number of English courses completed</b>	One	225	55.6
	Two	131	32.3
	Three	39	9.6
	Four	10	2.5

Table 4 shows the summary of the respondents' demographic information. There were high number of respondents from Faculty of Science and Technology (FST,  $f=146$ , 36%) and Faculty of Islamic Studies (FPI,  $f=100$ , 24.7%), and Faculty of Engineering and Built Environment (FKAB,  $f=52$ , 12.8%). Moderate representations of respondents were observed from Faculty of Health Sciences (FSK,  $f=34$ , 8.4%), Faculty of Medicine (FPER,  $f=23$ , 5.7%), and Faculty of Dentistry (FGG,  $f=20$ , 4.9%). Low representations of respondents were recorded from Faculty of Economy and Management (FEP,  $f=13$ , 3.2%), Faculty of Education (FPEND,  $f=7$ , 1.7%), Faculty of Pharmacy (FFAR,  $f=5$ , 1.2%), Faculty of Law (FUU,  $f=3$ , .7%), Faculty of Social Science and Humanities (FSSK,  $f=1$ , .2%), and School of Liberal Studies (CITRA,  $f=1$ , .2%). The distribution analysis shows a faculty distribution skew and this imbalance may have introduced introduced a degree of systematic bias into the findings where the conclusions drawn may be more reflective of trends specific to these faculties rather than being fully representative of the broader population across all faculties.

In terms of the respondents' English language proficiency and their MUET level, most of them were Low Independent (MUET level 3 to 3.5,  $f=197$ , 48.6%) and High Independent (MUET level 4 to 4.5,  $f=199$ , 49.1%) students. There were very limited number of respondents with Basic English language proficiency (MUET level 2 to 2.5,  $f=5$ , 1.2%) as generally the university requires a minimum MUET level of 3 for university enrolment. Similarly, Proficient respondents (MUET level 5 to 5+,  $f=4$ , 1.0%) were also scarce in this study as this level of English language proficiency is only typically observed among English language teachers because English is not the country's first language.

Most of the respondents were first year ( $f=165$ , 40.7%) and second year students ( $f=179$ , 44.2%). There were limited numbers of third year ( $f=42$ , 10.4%) and fourth year students ( $f=19$ , 4.7%). Additionally, most of them were still in the early stage of their English language learning at the university where they had only completed one English course ( $f=225$ , 55.6%). Some of them had moderate level of experience with the curriculum with two English courses being completed ( $f=131$ , 32.3%) while smaller groups of other respondents had completed the whole English language curriculum at the university with three ( $f=39$ , 9.6%) and four ( $f=10$ , 2.5%) English courses being completed respectively.

#### 4.2. Level of Students' Attitude

Table 5 summarizes the overall level of respondents' cognitive and emotional attitude towards English language learning.

Table 5. Level of Attitude

Construct	Sub-Construct	Mean	SD	Interpretation
Attitude	(Overall)	4.36	.42	Very High
	Cognitive Attitude	4.48	.43	Very High
	Emotional Attitude	4.24	.48	High

The findings established that the respondents strongly believe ( $\bar{x}$ =4.48,  $s$ =.43) in the importance of the English language for their education, confidence, and future career prospects. However, their own motivation level to learn English and their social language learning circle could be further improved ( $\bar{x}$ =4.24,  $s$ =.48) for more effective language learning experience. This phenomenon is similar with results from a study by Wati (2023) where the participants' high cognitive attitude contradicts their low affective attitude towards English language learning, implying that there is a crucial disparity between learners' cognitive beliefs and motivation level.

### 4.3. Level of Students' Speaking Anxiety

Table 6 summarizes the respondents' overall level of speaking anxiety during English classes at the university.

Table 6. Level of Speaking Anxiety

Construct	Sub-Construct	Mean	SD	Interpretation
Speaking Anxiety	(Overall)	2.97	.90	Moderate

The results highlighted that the respondents exhibited moderate signs of anxiety ( $\bar{x}$ =2.97,  $s$ =.90) such as trembling hands and shaking voice which stemmed from nervousness, fear, and panic when required to speak in English with either with the teacher or fellow classmates. However, it is important to note that these signs of anxiety did not prevent them from participating in lessons as more behavioral signs of anxiety such as avoiding group participations, hesitating when responding in English or deciding to not speak in English were found to be low. Majid and Mohamad (2024) explained that despite some ongoing anxiety about speaking, learners were able to remain active and confident during classroom lessons in the context of flipped classroom approach. Another similar study also affirmed that speaking anxiety does not necessarily lead to lower classroom participation because learners are able to develop coping mechanisms that enable them to overcome their fears and still speak in English (Wang, 2022).

### 4.4. Level of Students' Remote Learning Readiness

Table 7 below summarizes the respondents' overall level of remote learning readiness during online English classes.

Table 7: Level of Remote Learning Readiness

Construct	Sub-Construct	Mean	SD	Interpretation
Remote Learning Readiness	(Overall)	4.12	.47	High
	Self-directed Learning	3.94	.56	High
	Computer & Internet Efficacy	4.31	.48	Very High

Based on the findings, the respondents reported very high confidence ( $\bar{x}$ =4.31,  $s$ =.48) in using technological tools such as Microsoft Teams for online classes and web browsers to find information through any electronic devices like computer, tablets or smart phones. However, they had comparatively

lower self-directed learning abilities ( $\bar{x}=3.94$ ,  $s=.56$ ) and may require face-to-face English language classes and direct supervision from English language instructors due to virtual distractions such as social media and gaming during online learning settings. This research finding is consistent with results from multiple studies which established various reasons that could also deter effective online learning such as family distractions and unreliable internet connection (Maheshwari et al., 2022), trouble focusing and maintaining attention (Tan et al., 2022), and engagement with smart phones and social media during online lessons (Wang, 2022).

#### 4.5. Level of Curriculum Acceptance

Table 8 below summarizes the overall level of respondents' CEFR-aligned English language curriculum acceptance at the university.

Table 8. Level of Curriculum Acceptance

Construct	Sub-Construct	Mean	SD	Interpretation
Curriculum Acceptance	(Overall)	4.29	.46	High
	Context	4.31	.50	Very High
	Input	4.29	.52	High
	Process	4.24	.50	High
	Product	4.32	.48	Very High

The findings showed positive learners' perceptions towards the overall curriculum relevance ( $\bar{x}=4.31$ ,  $s=.50$ ) and effectiveness ( $\bar{x}=4.32$ ,  $s=.48$ ). However, there is a need to improve the curriculum resources ( $\bar{x}=4.29$ ,  $s=.50$ ) and teaching-learning activities ( $\bar{x}=4.24$ ,  $s=.50$ ). This indicates a curriculum-pedagogical gap where the curriculum structure is widely perceived to be effective, but the implemented pedagogy which is the daily teaching-learning activities, the instructional strategies, and the supporting resources are perceived to be lagging behind. Without addressing these instructional gaps, the positive perceptions of the overall curriculum may eventually be undermined by a frustrating classroom experience. However, this tension can be resolved by incorporating audiovisual materials that can attract learners' interest and actively engage all their language skills. This is because interactive linguistic multimedia resources such as videos, pictures and animated content can provide clear instructions and engaging content (Rahmanu & Santosa, 2022) while facilitating cognitive growth (Yi & Wei, 2022). Similarly, there was a demand for learning activities that are interesting while encouraging peer interaction and group work. Multiple previous studies have established the role of cooperative learning experiences in fostering a sense of language learning community and support (Peter & Asmawi, 2023), providing learners with opportunities to practice language skills in context (Sudewi & Fadilah, 2023), and creating enjoyable learning experiences which leads to increased motivation (Kanellopoulou et al., 2021).

In terms of classroom activities, the respondents indicated that more activities should be provided so that they have adequate practice of the language skills learnt. This is because learners who are supplied with lots of opportunities to use their target language can attain higher language proficiency (Tran et al., 2021). Similarly, the results also implied that the classroom activities at the university were not sufficient to guarantee improvements in their English language proficiency. One key strategy that can be employed is through repetition of difficult course content until learners achieve mastery of language skills. Kriukova et al. (2024) found that spaced repetition, which is reviewing difficult content at increasing intervals, provide opportunities for learners to practice language skills frequently and prevent cognitive overload, leading to improved retention of vocabulary and grammar skills. Resulting from repeated practice of language skills, learners gain more confidence and attain better language fluency over time, enabling them to use their language skills effectively in various real-life contexts (Lo, 2024).

Revisions of specific language content were also indicated from the survey responses as the participants believe that at the end of the English courses, their writing, grammar, and overall English language

proficiency might not have had profound improvements. This implies that despite the focus on speaking and communicative competence, English language curricula at higher education institutions should not completely disregard the significance of other language skills in their curriculum content. This is because the mastery of academic writing skills is essential for various tasks that university students are expected to undertake (Hass & Lenong, 2021). Similarly, improving learners' grammatical accuracy allows them to develop metalinguistic knowledge and skills to engage multidisciplinary texts more analytically and critically (Tuttle & Munalim, 2022), which is paramount in the context of higher education. In contrast, university students who lack these foundational skills may struggle to meet academic standards and transition to the professional world, where effective written communication is equally valued.

#### 4.6. Factors Influencing Curriculum Acceptance

Table 9. Skewness and Kurtosis of Variables

Variables	Skewness	Kurtosis
Attitude	-.068	-.817
Speaking Anxiety	.079	-.621
Remote Learning Readiness	.331	-.578
Curriculum Acceptance	.377	-1.146

Table 9 shows that the skewness and kurtosis values for all variables fall within the recommended range for normality (Hair et al., 2022), indicating that the dataset is approximately normally distributed. Furthermore, scatterplots for each predictor against the dependent variable revealed fitted lines that closely approximated a straight line, satisfying the assumption of linearity. Adherence to these parametric assumptions justified the use of Pearson's correlation and multiple regression analyses.

Table 10. Inter-predictor Correlation Matrix

Variable	Attitude	Remote Learning Readiness	Speaking Anxiety	Curriculum Acceptance
Attitude	1	.63**	-.19**	.73**
Remote Learning Readiness	.63**	1	-.25**	.67**
Speaking Anxiety	-.19**	-.25**	1	-.20**
Curriculum Acceptance	.73**	.67**	-.20**	1

\*\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Results from Pearson's correlation test in Table 10 show that there was a statistically significant strong and positive relationship between respondents' attitude and their curriculum acceptance ( $r=.73$ ,  $p<.001$ ), accounting for 52.9% of the bivariate variance explained. This indicates that learners' attitude is substantially correlated to their curriculum acceptance, providing a strong statistical ground for the acceptance of the first hypothesis ( $H_1$ ). On the other hand, although speaking anxiety was found to be significantly associated with curriculum acceptance ( $p<.001$ ), the relationship was observed to be weak and negative ( $r=-.20$ ), explaining only 4.1% of the bivariate variance. This suggests that while lower speaking anxiety is slightly linked to higher curriculum acceptance, allowing the second hypothesis ( $H_2$ ) to be supported, its explanatory power is still very limited. In addition, remote learning readiness demonstrated a statistically significant strong and positive relationship with curriculum acceptance ( $r=.67$ ,  $p<.001$ ), explaining 44.4% of the bivariate variance. This result provides strong justification for the third hypothesis ( $H_3$ ) to be accepted. Additionally, it should be noted that these figures represent bivariate variance explained in isolation and because the predictors shared significant variance, these values cannot be interpreted as independent or additive contributions to the multi-predictor regression

model. Overall, the findings highlighted higher influence of cognitive and environmental learning factors towards curriculum acceptance compared to behavioural factors.

#### 4.7. Predictors of Curriculum Acceptance

Prior to conducting the multiple linear regression analysis, the presence of multicollinearity among independent variables was assessed by examining the correlation coefficients, Tolerance values, and Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) values. In this study, Pearson’s correlation values among predictors remained below .7, Tolerance values were above .1, and VIF values were less than 10; collectively, these results confirmed the absence of multicollinearity (Brun et al., 2019; Hair et al., 2019). Subsequently, the multiple linear regression was performed to identify the dominant predictors of university students’ acceptance of the CEFR-aligned English Language Curriculum. Diagnostic checks of the residuals were conducted where visual inspection of the residuals scatterplot indicated homoscedasticity and linearity, while the Normal P-P plot confirmed the normality of residuals.

Table 11. Regression Coefficients

Variable	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.	95.0% Confidence Interval for B	
	B	Std. Error	Beta			Lower Bound	Upper Bound
(Constant)	.530	.179		2.962	.003	.178	.883
Attitude	.554	.045	.508	12.444	<.001	.467	.642
Remote Learning Readiness	.334	.041	.341	8.236	<.001	.254	.413
Speaking Anxiety	-.010	.017	-.019	-.597	.551	-.43	.023

The results in Table 11 indicated significant predicting effects of attitude and remote learning readiness towards curriculum acceptance because  $p < .001$ . On the other hand, the study discovered the non-predictive role of speaking anxiety towards curriculum acceptance because  $p = .551$ . This finding is consistent with the previously established weak correlation between speaking anxiety and curriculum acceptance. In terms of predictive strength, university students’ attitude emerged as the dominant predictor with  $B = .554$ , followed by remote learning readiness with  $B = .334$ . The predicting effect of speaking anxiety can be considered negligible, as indicated by its non-significant beta coefficient ( $B = -.010$ ,  $p = .551$ ). This suggests that speaking anxiety does not exert a meaningful direct influence on curriculum acceptance when considered alongside other variables. Furthermore, the weak correlation strength indicates that anxiety accounts for only a minimal portion of the variance, making its unique contribution statistically insignificant in the presence of stronger predictors such as attitude and remote learning readiness. While speaking anxiety demonstrated a limited direct influence in the current model, its role may be more complex than a simple linear relationship. A plausible, albeit speculative, explanation is that speaking anxiety influences curriculum acceptance through indirect pathways, potentially by shaping learners’ attitude or their remote learning readiness and this can be confirmed in future studies that employ formal mediation analyses.

Table 12. ANOVA Analysis

	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Regression	50.863	3	16.954	200.474	<.001 <sup>b</sup>
Residual	33.913	401	.085		
Total	84.777	404			

Table 13. Regression Model Summary

R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Durbin-Watson
.775 <sup>a</sup>	.600	.597	.29081	2.013

Subsequently, the regression model was found to be statistically significant, which is reported from Table 12 as  $F(3,401) = 200.474, p < .001$ . The very large F-value of 200.474 implied that collectively, the independent variables can predict university learners’ curriculum acceptance accurately and the probability of this predicting effect to occur by chance is only less than .001. This is supported by the high adjusted  $R^2$  value of .597 which is the variation explained by the model in the population, shown in Table 13 above. The adjusted  $R^2$  value is interpreted as more than half (59.7%) of the variability in university students’ CEFR-aligned English language curriculum acceptance is explained by the predictors. Furthermore, the Durbin-Watson value of 2.013 strengthened the viability of this model, proving that there is no autocorrelation in the residuals (errors between predicted and actual values) and the absence of Type I errors. In summary, alternative hypothesis ( $H_4$ ) was accepted. The equation for the regression model is:

$$\text{Curriculum Acceptance} = 0.530 + 0.554\text{Attitude} + 0.334\text{Remote Learning Readiness}$$

## 5. Discussion

The collective findings of this study suggest that the successful implementation of the CEFR-aligned English language curriculum from students’ perspectives is fundamentally predicated on an ‘attitude-remote learning readiness’ nexus rather than being hindered by emotional barriers like speaking anxiety. While the current CEFR language education policy aims to standardize proficiency, the results indicate that student acceptance is less about the linguistic content and more about the learner’s psychological predisposition and digital learning environment. A critical interrogation of the findings reveals that student attitude acts as a primary gatekeeper for the successful implementation of new English language education policies; university students who hold positive attitudes are significantly more likely to respond well to the newly implemented curriculum structure. This suggests that for the CEFR alignment to move beyond a top-down mandate and achieve bottom-up adoption, students must first perceive the curriculum as relevant to their personal learning goals (Tan et al., 2021). As noted in previous literature, such attitudes are essential for improving learning engagement (Ramzan et al., 2023) and increasing the motivation required for active participation (Doley, 2023). However, the evidence further demonstrates that attitude does not function in isolation. The strong inter-predictor correlation between attitude and remote learning readiness highlights that curriculum acceptance is heavily influenced by digital self-efficacy. For the CEFR framework to be effectively implemented in the current digital age, students must feel technologically competent in the medium of delivery, as digital resource utilization forms the backbone of the modern online learning experience (Han et al., 2021). In the absence of this remote learning readiness, even a positive attitude may be insufficient to overcome the virtual challenges and distractions that necessitate high levels of self-regulation and independent learning behaviours (Araka et al., 2020).

On the other hand, while speaking anxiety demonstrated a significant bivariate correlation with curriculum acceptance, its failure to emerge as a unique predictor suggests that speaking anxiety is a redundant variable when accounted for alongside attitude and readiness, within the context of this study. Essentially, anxiety seems to be a sign of low readiness or a negative attitude rather than an independent factor of curriculum rejection. This implies that policy interventions focusing solely on anxiety reduction may be misplaced; instead, CEFR-aligned language curricula should prioritize building online self-efficacy and self-regulated learning behaviors (Ulfatun et al., 2021). When students are technologically prepared and intrinsically motivated, they possess the coping skills and learning drive necessary to maintain high engagement levels, effectively rendering their speaking anxiety a secondary concern (Gurajena et al., 2021; Tan et al., 2023). As a result, they are able to engage with the curriculum actively, leading to higher academic performance (Razali et al., 2022; Almufareh, 2021). This suggests that the broader aims of the CEFR language education policy should not simply focus on curricular and

pedagogical changes but should also consider the digital and psychological learning ecosystem where the learner feels both capable and willing to adapt to new language learning environments (Tan et al., 2023). This is because much of the variance anxiety explains is captured by more dominant cognitive and environmental factors, implying that while speaking anxiety is a relevant factor, it does not provide an independent contribution to curriculum acceptance beyond attitude and remote learning readiness.

This finding represents a theoretically crucial contribution that disputes the traditional assumption of anxiety as a common hindrance to learner engagement in language classes (Tsiplakides & Keramida, 2009). This outcome aligns with an emerging body of evidence, including the work of Hasanah and Desvitasari (2023) and Nabilah (2021), which reported non-significant relationships between anxiety and performance or learner beliefs (Rajani Na Ayuthaya & Sitthitikul, 2016; Krishnasamy, 2015). In lieu of being a stable predictor, anxiety is increasingly regarded as a context-dependent factor within a complex dynamic system where pedagogical factors such as task structure, scaffolded feedback, and instructional design play a more proximal role in forming learner's response to a curriculum (Wang et al., 2025; Korucu-Kis & Sanal, 2020; Nguyen, 2024). These approaches enable students to effectively employ anxiety coping mechanisms such as using task-based learning approaches (Badrasawi et al., 2020), focusing on communicative competence over language accuracy (Cabansag, 2020), and seeking for institutional support (Aziz et al., 2023).

The curriculum acceptance model developed in this study provides practical implications for CEFR-alignment initiatives. First and foremost, it highlights the significance of measuring and evaluating learners' receptions to the implemented curriculum for future curriculum revisions (Doley, 2023). Evaluating student feedback acts as an effective tool for identifying curriculum weaknesses (Bhurtyal et al., 2022) as integrating students' perspectives into the curriculum improves academic and emotional competencies by increasing a sense of belonging (Nirmalasari et al., 2024). Since attitude is the strongest predictor of student acceptance in this study, curriculum designers must prioritize cultivating positive students' emotional attitudes by creating interesting and enjoyable curriculum content (Ramzan et al., 2023). Additionally, pedagogical approaches that promote self-regulated learning skills are essential, allowing students to become proactive language learners who can effectively manage distractions in the virtual learning environment (Chui, 2024).

To translate these findings into policy enactment and curricular actions, the Ministry of Higher Education (MoHE) and university curriculum committees should supplement existing CEFR alignment strategies by adopting Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) that regularly measure the Student Acceptance Index (SAI). This can be carried out through regular end-of-semester student evaluations where institutions should be aiming for a minimum of 80% registered students reporting high curriculum acceptance (Likert score 4.0). By explicitly operationalizing SAI as a formal KPI, curriculum developers can identify 'problematic' language courses where low acceptance serves as a lead indicator for possible future classroom engagement issues. Secondly, instead of viewing post-COVID 19 online learning and language curriculum as separate unrelated factors, curriculum developers should actively address the direct impacts of the virtual environment toward language learning and overall language acquisition. Diagnostic assessment of students' remote learning readiness should be conducted prior to their enrolment in language courses so that corresponding interventions such as digital-readiness workshops can be planned in advance. This KPI is a direct policy enactment of the findings where technical and self-regulation barriers are actively addressed. In summary, by regularly measuring and evaluating students' learning attitude and digital self-efficacy through these KPIs, policymakers and curriculum leaders can mitigate the underlying causes of student resistance and ensure that the CEFR-framework implementation achieves sustainable, bottom-up acceptance across all Malaysian HEIs.

## 6. Conclusion

The study extends conceptual understanding of student acceptance of implemented English language curriculum at a HEI by integrating cognitive and environmental factors within the CEFR framework. By establishing that attitude and remote learning readiness as key predictors of curriculum acceptance, the study highlights the utmost necessity for HEIs to design learner-centred and context-sensitive CEFR-aligned English language curricula. On the other hand, the non-predictive role of speaking anxiety in this study offers a meaningful contribution as it challenges scholarly assumptions about its centrality in English language curriculum and instruction, especially in similar educational contexts. As the CEFR framework continues to be the prime source of reference for English language education, the study's evaluative contributions enable other HEIs around the world to measure the effectiveness of their own implemented English language curricula. Additionally, the study provides crucial contributions towards curriculum developers in redesigning and improving the English language curriculum and ensuring that they are well-aligned within the CEFR framework.

There are several limitations of the study. First, it evaluates the English language curriculum at only one public Malaysian university which implies that the results may not reflect relationships present in other HEI settings. Secondly, speaking anxiety was only measured through its interpersonal anxiety sub-construct and therefore the full construct may yield different results. Moreover, relationships between the variables across different subgroups such as proficiency levels were not further explored due to data limitations. These limitations provide clear pathways for future studies that could further examine, explain and fill in the gaps identified. First and foremost, future studies should evaluate other CEFR-aligned English language curricula offered at other public and private higher education institutions in Malaysia. By doing so, a more holistic monitoring of the CEFR-alignment initiatives and evaluation CEFR-aligned curricula can be ensured. Secondly, future studies that critically examine the influence of subgroups (i.e. faculties, proficiency levels) as well as potential mediating effects of attitude and remote learning on speaking anxiety may offer deeper insights into these observed relationships. Finally, mixed-methods curriculum evaluation studies can further supplement the findings in this study by exploring the issues from multiple perspectives through data triangulation, providing a more nuanced understanding of student acceptance of CEFR-aligned curricula in Malaysian HEIs.

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