

Towards an implementation framework of CEFR in the Philippines

Malimban, Cristina T. ✉

Graduate School, Lyceum of the Philippines University - Batangas, Philippines

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Abstract

This study investigated the implementation and challenges of the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) and its relationship with the communicative competence of undergraduate students in selected private and public Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) in the Philippines, as perceived by English language educators and students. Specifically, the research examined three core dimensions: the current extent of CEFR implementation, the key challenges and structural barriers encountered by English language educators during its execution, and the level of communicative competence demonstrated by undergraduate students. Utilizing a quantitative descriptive research design, the study sampled 42 English language teaching personnel and 435 undergraduate students across six CEFR-implementing HEIs—five located in Region IV-A (CALABARZON) and one in Region VII (Central Visayas). The data collection instrument was adapted from the CEFR Quality Assurance Matrix, undergoing rigorous pilot testing and reliability verification prior to deployment. Findings revealed that both faculty members and students evaluated the undergraduates' linguistic and sociolinguistic communicative competences as "moderately competent." To address implementation gaps and enhance learning outcomes, the study recommends establishing a robust quality assurance mechanism for CEFR curriculum integration to standardize faculty evaluation criteria and feedback systems. Finally, a strategic framework for CEFR integration is proposed to guide future curriculum enhancements in Philippine higher education.

Keywords: Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR), communicative competence, linguistic competence, sociolinguistic competence, Higher Education Institutions (HEIs)

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1. Introduction

Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) as a valuable, objective benchmark that modernizes language instruction, though its practical adoption often reveals significant institutional and pedagogical friction. CEFR in higher education institutions (HEIs) has evolved from a regionally focused European guideline into a world standard for language policy, curriculum alignment, and mobility assessment (Byram, 2022; Council of Europe, 2020). English communication and the emergence of the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) serve as fundamental pillars in modern language education, workforce readiness, and internationalization. English operates as the primary lingua franca of the globalized economy, facilitating cross-border trade, technological exchange, higher education mobility, and diplomatic relations. As highlighted by Filipino researchers such as Asio et al. (2023), mastery of English is no longer viewed merely as an academic subject, but rather as an indispensable driver of global competitiveness, academic performance, employability, and cross-cultural adaptability.

In nations like the Philippines, where English historically underpins economic sectors like Business Process Outsourcing (BPO) and international service industries, maintaining strong communicative proficiency is essential for sustaining a comparative advantage in the international labor market (Icamen, 2020; Jugo, 2020). However, recent analyses by scholars such as Sosas et al. (2024) emphasize that changes in international educational standards and shifting domestic proficiency trends require more systematic, objective, and globally recognizable benchmarks to evaluate language performance accurately.

CEFR originally developed by the Council of Europe to standardize language qualification across European borders, HEIs worldwide—spanning Latin America, Asia, and the Middle East—now treat the CEFR as key tool for internationalization, allowing universities to benchmark foreign language proficiency, streamline student and faculty mobility, and align local degree programs with recognized global standards (Council of Europe, 2020; Miqawati et al., 2023). Within university admissions and academic mobility, the framework provides transparent "Can-Do" metric that simplifies entry and exit language requirements—typically targeting B2 or C1 levels for English-medium instruction programs—without relying strictly on national testing schemes (Byram, 2022).

In Philippine Higher Education Institutions (HEIs), the acceptance and application of the CEFR for Languages is rapidly evolving from a niche international standard into a vital benchmark for quality assurance, internationalization, and curriculum alignment (Council of Europe, 2020; Howard, 2024). Historically, Philippine universities relied heavily on traditional standardized testing, such as TOEFL, TOEIC, or local institutional entrance exams (Miqawati et al., 2023). However, key education stakeholders—including the Commission on Higher Education (CHED), regional accrediting bodies like PACUCOA, and advocacy coalitions like the Government Academic Industry Network (GAIN)—have pushed to institutionalize the CEFR to safeguard the country's competitive global advantage in English communication and foreign language education (Byram, 2022; Council of Europe, 2020).

The theoretical framework of CEFR in the context of education is anchored in a social constructivist paradigm and an action-oriented approach, which redefines language learners as "social agents" who use language purposefully to accomplish real-world tasks within complex socio-cultural contexts (Aggoun, 2024; Council of Europe, 2020; Piccardo, 2022). Moreover, the implementation of the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) as a quality assurance mechanism by English language educators requires a systematic, coherent alignment across three interdependent stages of instruction: planning, delivery, and evaluation (Council of Europe, 2020; Howard, 2024; Mohammed et al., 2021).

On the other hand, modern applied linguistics frames undergraduate communicative competence as a multi-

dimensional, socio-cognitive construct that integrates linguistic, sociolinguistic, and pragmatic sub-competences (Aggoun, 2024; Byram, 2022; Council of Europe, 2020; Howard, 2024). Moving past traditional views focused solely on grammatical accuracy, the CEFR emphasizes that students must combine formal vocabulary and syntax with the socio-cultural awareness needed to adapt tone and register appropriately across academic contexts (Byram, 2022; Council of Europe, 2020). Moreover, pragmatic competence allows learners to construct cohesive discourse, manage implicit meanings, and mediate cross-cultural interactions (Aggoun, 2024; Piccardo, 2022). Ultimately, adopting this holistic view enables higher education institutions to build targeted, task-based curricula and assessments that effectively equip graduates for global professional demands (Howard, 2024; Miqawati et al., 2023).

Moving beyond traditional communicative language teaching that often-treated language as an isolated set of transactional skills, CEFR integrates cognitive, emotional, and social dimensions into a holistic educational model (Byram, 2022; Howard, 2024). Under this model, language activities are conceptualized through four communicative modes—reception, production, interaction, and mediation—replacing conventional division of the four isolated macro-skills (reading, writing, listening, and speaking) with a dynamic system of collaborative meaning-making and cross-cultural agency (Aggoun, 2024; Council of Europe, 2020; North, 2022). Furthermore, contemporary educational theory surrounding the CEFR emphasizes plurilingual and pluricultural competence, viewing an individual's linguistic repertoire not as separate, compartmentalized languages, but as an interconnected resource that empowers social actors to negotiate meaning, mediate concepts, and bridge diverse cultural landscapes (Byram, 2022; Council of Europe, 2020; Piccardo, 2022).

The CEFR for Languages has fundamentally reshaped language education (Council of Europe, 2020); however, English language educators across primary, secondary, and tertiary sectors encounter multifaceted challenges and institutional barriers during its practical implementation (Howard, 2024; Mohammed et al., 2021). At the pedagogical and conceptual level, many educators struggle with a gap in conceptual understanding regarding how to operationalize complex CEFR "Can-Do" action-oriented descriptors into daily lesson planning, communicative task design, and constructive formative assessment (Byram, 2022; Mohammed et al., 2021). This issue is often compounded by limited or overly theoretical professional development programs, leaving teachers ill-prepared to adapt imported CEFR-aligned textbooks and materials to fit local socio-cultural and linguistic realities (Miqawati et al., 2023; Mohammed et al., 2021).

Administratively, educators face severe structural constraints, including heightened workload, class size inflation, rigid administrative mandates, and tight instructional schedules that limit the individualized, differentiated instruction required by task-based CEFR approaches (Mohammed et al., 2021). Furthermore, discrepancies between students' existing proficiency levels and targeted CEFR outcomes—alongside varying institutional assessment standards—create cognitive overload and instructional friction for language faculty trying to bridge these learning gaps (Miqawati et al., 2023; Mohammed et al., 2021). Consequently, research demonstrates that successful CEFR integration requires moving away from top-down mandates toward continuous, contextualized teacher training, material adaptation, and sustained institutional support (Byram, 2022; Howard, 2024; Miqawati et al., 2023).

In the context of Philippine Higher Education Institutions (HEIs), this empirical gap becomes particularly pronounced as universities navigate the transition toward global internationalization standards while addressing localized linguistic realities. Although key educational governance bodies—such as the Commission on Higher Education (CHED) and regional accrediting organizations like PACUCOA—advocate for the integration of the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) to benchmark graduate outcomes at B2 or C1 levels, implementation across local campuses remains largely fragmented and policy-driven. Philippine higher education research frequently documents initial institutional readiness, curriculum mapping, or baseline English proficiency scores (e.g., diagnostic testing of incoming freshmen); however, there is a striking absence of empirical data examining how Filipino educators systematically operationalize CEFR quality assurance mechanisms across lesson planning, task-based classroom delivery, and criterion-referenced evaluation.

This gap is further compounded by the unique sociolinguistic landscape of the Philippines, where undergraduate students often demonstrate high receptive familiarity with English but face persistent challenges in productive, socio-pragmatic, and formal academic registers. Consequently, investigating this relationship within Philippine HEIs provides a crucial, localized empirical basis for determining whether structured, teacher-led CEFR quality assurance practices directly enhance the holistic, multi-dimensional communicative competence of Filipino undergraduates, thereby bridging the divide between national policy mandates and classroom-level instructional outcomes. This research gap is supported with studies in Philippine higher education confirm a clear disconnect between macro-level CEFR policy mandates and classroom-level quality assurance (CHED, 2020; Lappay et al., 2026; Nool et al., 2026; Sosas et al., 2024; Villanueva et al., 2023). Investigations across local universities reveal significant proficiency imbalances, such as language students performing well in receptive skills while struggling with productive skills like speaking (Lappay et al., 2026), and English majors remaining at baseline A2 levels despite institutional targets (Nool et al., 2026).

Furthermore, research across regions like Bicol and Cavite demonstrates that local instructional practices continue to emphasize general English proficiency instead of structured, teacher-led quality control in task-based and socio-pragmatic delivery (Sosas et al., 2024; Villanueva et al., 2023). Findings highlight a persistent empirical gap in implementing data-driven instructional mechanisms that effectively address students' holistic communicative competencies (Lappay et al., 2026; Nool et al., 2026; Sosas et al., 2024). Addressing the practical gap regarding the lack of evidence-based feedback loops to guide curriculum enhancement in Philippine Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) requires examining how empirical execution experiences are rarely funneled back into curriculum revision. Although institutions adopt national guidelines and international frameworks—such as the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR)—university administration and curriculum committees rarely collect or utilize actionable, data-driven feedback from classroom instruction (CHED, 2020; Nool et al., 2026).

Recent analyses by the Second Congressional Commission on Education emphasize that higher education curricula in the Philippines suffer from a prolonged, reactive update cycle, taking up to 11 years on average to revise Policies, Standards, and Guidelines (PSGs) (Second Congressional Commission on Education, 2026). As such as resource constraints, large class sizes, and insufficient professional development—without formal mechanisms to refine syllabi or pedagogical strategies based on these real-world barriers (Kilag et al., 2024; Sosas et al., 2024). This study advances SDG 4 (Quality Education) and SDG 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth) by evaluating CEFR implementation across Philippine higher education institutions to bridge the gap between national language policies and classroom execution (CHED, 2023; OECD, 2025; Valdez et al., 2022). By establishing empirical benchmarks for students' linguistic and sociolinguistic competencies, the research supports a shift from traditional grammar instruction to functional, action-oriented fluency aligned with international standards (Council of Europe, 2020; North, 2022). Additionally, it identifies key structural barriers—such as teacher readiness, resource disparities, and unstandardized assessments—and proposes a quality assurance mechanism and strategic integration framework to enhance institutional capacity and graduate employability (Farhan et al., 2023; Second Congressional Commission on Education, 2026).

This study aims to understand how college teachers' everyday teaching practices—specifically how they plan lessons, teach in class, and grade performance using CEFR standards—directly affect their students' overall English communication skills, including grammar, cultural appropriateness, and real-world usage. While government policies from the Commission on Higher Education (CHED) push for higher English standards, many Filipino students still perform well in reading and listening but struggle with speaking and writing in real-life settings. Using a simple Input-Process-Output (IPO) model, this research looks closely at classroom practices to find where teaching and learning get stuck. Ultimately, the study hopes to provide clear, practical data that can help Philippine universities improve their English curricula, upgrade teacher training, and turn government mandates into real student learning achievements.

By establishing a data-driven framework that links teacher-led quality assurance directly to students' multi-

dimensional communicative competence—encompassing linguistic, sociolinguistic, and pragmatic dimensions—this study provides an essential empirical foundation to ensure that CEFR implementation moves beyond administrative compliance toward meaningful instructional transformation (Byram, 2022; Council of Europe, 2020; Howard, 2024).

Objectives of the Study - This study aimed to examine the implementation and challenges of the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) and their relationship with the communicative competence of undergraduate students in selected public and private higher education institutions (HEIs) in the Philippines. It specifically sought to assess CEFR implementation in terms of planning, delivery, and evaluation; identify challenges related to relevance, validity, transparency, coherence, inclusiveness, and sustainability; assess students' linguistic, sociolinguistic, and pragmatic competence; examine the relationships among CEFR implementation, its challenges, and communicative competence; and develop a strategic CEFR implementation framework for Philippine HEIs aligned with global standards.

2. Methods

Research Design - The study used the descriptive research design. This design allowed the researcher to gather factual information that accurately represented the respondents' perceptions and experiences without manipulating any variables. This research design is deemed appropriate for this investigation that focuses on the implementation and challenges of CEFR and its relationship with the communicative competence of undergraduate students in select private and public HEIs in the Philippines from the perspective of the English language educators and students. Specifically, this study used quantitative survey methods to ensure prompt, yet efficient and systematic data gathering among intended respondents related to their HEI's CEFR implementation, challenges or barriers, and communicative competence of students that may guide in making future decisions with the design and development of a strategic enhancement program aimed at improving CEFR curriculum integration for the development of communicative language competence while promoting holistic English language learning aligned with global standards.

Participants of the Study - The respondents of the study are 42 English language teaching personnel and 435 students of six identified CEFR implementing public and private HEIs in the Philippines. Five HEIs are in region 4A – CALABARZON while one HEI is at region 7 – Central Visayas. The participating HEIs are coded as HEI 1, HEI 2, HEI 3, HEI 4, HEI 5, and HEI 6. All participants came from HEI 1, a state university with 15 teachers and 61 students; HEI 2, a private sectarian university with one teacher and 87 students; HEI 3, a private university with five teachers and 28 students; HEI 4, a private college with two teachers and 56 students; HEI 5, another state university with 11 teachers and 188 students; then, HEI 6 which is a private non-sectarian university with eight teachers and 14 students who completed the survey. The inclusion criteria required the participants to be actively teaching English language courses among undergraduate students at the select colleges and universities during school year 2025-2026. On the other hand, English language teachers without English language teaching experience of at least one semester as well as those assigned to teach non-English language courses with the identified CEFR implementing colleges and universities in the Philippines were excluded from the study. Meanwhile, the student participants ought to have taken an English language course with their current HEI for at least a semester during the school year 2025-2026 and level three students of the HEI's board programs. After identifying the CEFR implementing HEIs in the Philippines through quota sampling, Raosoft sample size calculator was used to determine sample size at five percent margin of error and 95% confidence level. Quota sampling is a non-probability sampling method where the researcher divides the population into mutually exclusive subgroups then recruit participants non-randomly until each subgroup reaches predetermined quota.

Instrument of the Study - The data gathering instrument for the survey is based on CEFR documents published on CEFR official and associated websites as well as CEFR eBooks and references. The survey instrument comprises four parts: namely, implementation (Part I), challenges or barriers in CEFR implementation (Part II), and communicative competence (Part III). The first part determined the implementation of CEFR (in

terms of quality assurance) by English language educators in its planning, delivery, and evaluation. This section is based on Piccardo et al. (2020). A quality assurance matrix for CEFR use. Council of Europe, European Centre for Modern Languages. Each of the components in this section has ten indicators or items adapted for the assessment of CEFR implementation in identified HEIs using 4 – fully implemented, 3 – moderately implemented, 2 – slightly implemented, and 1 – not at all implemented Likert scale. Meanwhile, the second part determined the key challenges and barriers encountered by the English language educators in CEFR implementation.

The underlying principles of CEFR quality assurance served as reference to compose questionnaire items corresponding to the following sub-domains: relevance and being appropriate/fit for purpose, validity or alignment, transparency or public availability of key information, coherence or internal consistency, inclusiveness, or opportunities to make choices, and sustainability or transferability of results. Each of the six sections has five indicators or items adapted for the assessment of challenges or barriers in the CEFR implementation in identified HEIs using 4 – most evident, 3 – moderately evident, 2 – slightly evident, and 1 – not evident Likert scale. The last part assessed the communicative language competence of undergraduate students has three subcategories: linguistic communicative competence, socio-linguistic communicative competence, and pragmatic communicative competence. This is based on the Council of Europe (2020). Linguistic communicative competence has 12 adapted items, while socio-linguistic communicative competence has three adapted items, and pragmatic communicative competence has 15 adapted items to provide a general assessment of the (HEI) students communicative competence based on the CEFR descriptors using 4 - most competent, 3 - moderately competent 2 - slightly competent, and 1 - not competent Likert scale.

An online form (Google Form) and its hardcopy were used for data gathering separately based on HEI's preference of survey instrument. Reliability and validity of the survey questionnaire was attained through the instrument's pilot test among Lyceum of the Philippines University – Batangas English language faculty of the College of Computing, Arts, and Sciences who were excluded in the actual survey.

Table 1
Summary Table on Reliability Test Result

Indicators	Cronbach Alpha	Remarks
Planning	0.981	Excellent
Delivery	0.960	Excellent
Evaluation	0.948	Excellent
Relevance	0.925	Excellent
Validity	0.954	Excellent
Transparency	0.970	Excellent
Coherence	0.972	Excellent
Inclusiveness	0.972	Excellent
Sustainability	0.980	Excellent
Linguistic Communicative Competences	0.943	Excellent
Socio-Linguistic Communicative Competences	0.954	Excellent
Pragmatic Communicative Competences	0.979	Excellent

George and Mallery (2003) provide the following rules of thumb:

“_ > .9 – Excellent, _ > .8 – Good, _ > .7 – Acceptable, _ > .6 – Questionable, _ > .5 – Poor, and _ < .5 – Unacceptable”

Data Gathering Procedure - The survey was started once granted approval for the conduct of the study. Nonetheless, prior to the survey, the researcher requested permission from the select HEIs for the conduct of the study among their English language teachers and students who met the inclusion and exclusion criteria of the participants set for the study. Then, the researcher distributed the copy of the final and approved survey questionnaire via Google Form link through the HEI representative's official email. On the contrary, a hardcopy of the questionnaire for data gathering was provided to the respondents with the HEIs that opted for personal distribution of the survey questionnaire. Once 100 percent of the survey responses was retrieved, coding and tabulating followed leading to the analysis, interpretation, and presentation of the research findings.

Data Analysis - The Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 28 was used in the statistical treatment of data by the assigned university statistician. Mean and rank were used to determine the implementation

of CEFR (in terms of quality assurance) by English language educators in its planning, delivery, and evaluation; as well as determine key challenges and barriers encountered by the English language educators in CEFR implementation, in terms of relevance, validity, transparency, coherence, inclusiveness, and sustainability; then assess the communicative competence of undergraduate students in terms of linguistic competence, sociolinguistic competence, and pragmatic competence. Spearman's rho was used to establish the significant relationship between the CEFR implementation, challenges, and communicative competence of the respondents.

Ethical Considerations - Prior to the conduct of any research-related activity, the researcher first sought clearance from the Research Ethics and Review Committee of the university. Once granted approval, the researcher oriented the target respondents to the nature, objectives, methods, extent, and any risks of the study. The researcher also cited the respondents' rights for voluntary participation and engagement. Then the researcher obtained their consent to participate in the study upon giving the reminder of the opportunity to withdraw their participation at any time without penalty. Moreover, the respondents were guaranteed of their anonymity and confidentiality as mandated in the data privacy policies of the university. Also, the respondents were informed of how their responses will be managed, used, and processed for academic research purposes, which shall be protected against intrusions and stored only until the researcher is given the corresponding credit for the course. With these, the researcher assures compliance with the Philippines' Data Privacy Act of 2012 (Republic Act No. 10173) in all aspects of the research process. Moreover, the respondents were treated in a manner that was fair, respectful and sensitive to their needs. Meanwhile, the instruments used for data collection were made objective to ensure integrity and transparency in data collection, analysis, and dissemination to preserve the overall credibility of the study.

3. Results and discussion

Table 2

Summary Table on the Implementation of CEFR

Indicators	Weighted Mean	Verbal Interpretation	Rank
Planning	3.10	Moderately Implemented	3
Delivery	3.32	Moderately Implemented	1
Evaluation	3.26	Moderately Implemented	2
Composite Mean	3.23	Moderately Implemented	

Legend: 3.50 – 4.00 = Fully Implemented; 2.50 – 3.49 = Moderately Implemented; 1.50 – 2.49 = Slightly Implemented; 1.00 - 1.49 = Not Implemented

Table 2 presents the summary on the implementation of CEFR across the three dimensions of planning, delivery and evaluation. It reveals a consistent pattern: CEFR implementation is moderately achieved across Planning (3.10), Delivery (3.32), and Evaluation (3.26), suggesting that CEFR is recognized but partially applied, and its participatory and systemic dimensions remain underdeveloped. The highest score indicator, Delivery (3.32), although moderately implemented, shows that it is the most implemented dimension of CEFR. This suggests that CEFR's action-oriented approach is most visible in the classroom, suggesting that teachers use purposeful tasks, communicative activities as well as learner-centered strategies. On the other hand, 'Evaluation' with 3.26 shows moderate implementation as well. This reveals a weakness in testing instruments and rubrics. A moderate score in evaluation means that teachers still prefer traditional assessment models over CEFR's holistic descriptors. The lowest score in the implementation of CEFR is in planning with 3.10. This shows gaps in curriculum analysis, consultation with learners and integration of CEFR objectives into institutional frameworks. The summary table shows that CEFR implementation is moderately achieved in all three dimensions, a pattern that highlights the need for more systematic integration of CEFR principles, integrating learner involvement, teacher development, and coherent evaluation systems.

Table 3 presents the summary table on the challenges and barriers in CEFR implementation with 1.97 composite mean and slightly evident. Significantly, 'relevance' ranks first with 2.10 mean, 'transparency' with 2.08, 'coherence' with 2.01, validity, 1.97, and 'inclusiveness' as well as 'sustainability' (5.5) rank second, third, fourth, and 5.5, respectively. The results reveal noticeable operational issue, led by concerns over relevance (2.10) and transparency (2.08).

Table 3*Summary Table on the Challenges and Barriers in CEFR Implementation*

Indicators	Weighted Mean	Verbal Interpretation	Rank
1. Relevance	2.10	Slightly Evident	1
2. Validity	1.97	Slightly Evident	4
3. Transparency	2.08	Slightly Evident	2
4. Coherence	2.01	Slightly Evident	3
5. Inclusiveness	1.84	Slightly Evident	5.5
6. Sustainability	1.84	Slightly Evident	5.5
Composite Mean	1.84	Slightly Evident	

Legend: 3.50 – 4.00 = Most Evident; 2.50 – 3.49 = Moderately Evident; 1.50 – 2.49 = Slightly Evident; 1.00 - 1.49 = Not Evident

This suggests that actors on the ground like the teachers, students, and administrators experience a disconnect between standardized CEFR descriptors and their local, real-world educational goals. With this, standard global scales may feel overly abstract or difficult to adapt to specific socio-cultural contexts. Relevant to this, transparency issues involve communication and policy dissemination gaps. When descriptors or assessment rubrics are unclear, teachers interpret CEFR levels inconsistently, while students struggle to understand what is required to reach the next proficiency level in transitioning from A2 to B1. Hence, language assessment and policy research highlights that local reporting tools consistently fail to communicate what CEFR levels mean in practice to students, parents, and employers (Saville, 2022). Supported by the findings, misalignment among curriculum goals, classroom practice, and testing methods remains a persistent operational barrier. Additionally, 1.97 mean reflects moderate concern on whether classroom assessments legitimately capture true language proficiency as defined by CEFR's action-oriented approach, rather than testing rote grammar or vocabulary knowledge.

Tied at rank 5.5 with 1.84 mean, inclusiveness and sustainability represent areas where challenges are lowest relative to other dimensions. While teachers and systems are maintaining basic functional continuity and inclusive environments, there remains room to strengthen long-term resource security, decision-maker buy-in, and pluralistic teaching strategies. Even more, equity and sustainability literature by Thomas et al. (2022) reveals that while issues like cultural diversity, student self-regulation, and long-term funding do not always manifest as immediate daily crises, they represent persistent, foundational weaknesses.

Table 4 presents the summary table of communicative language competence with 3.25 composite mean interpreted as moderately competent. Overall, linguistic communicative competence ranks first (3.27) followed by socio-linguistic and pragmatic communicative competences at rank 2.5 (3.22). Learners' total communicative language competence place their performance within CEFR B1. While learners possess a solid foundation in core vocabulary and basic functional mechanics (Linguistic Competence = 3.27), they face increasing operational issues when navigating social registers, subtle cultural functions, and complex discourse structure (Sociolinguistic and Pragmatic Competences = 3.22).

Table 4*Summary Table on Communicative Language Competence*

	Faculty			Students						Over-all Rank
	WM	VI	R	WM	VI	R	WM	VI		
Linguistic Communicative Competences	3.24	MoC	1	3.31	MoC	2.5	3.27	MoC		1
Socio-Linguistic Communicative Competences	3.17	MoC	2	3.32	MoC	1	3.25	MoC		2
Pragmatic Communicative Competences	3.13	MoC	3	3.31	MoC	2.5	3.22	MoC		3
Composite Mean	3.18	MoC		3.32	MoC		3.25	MoC		

Legend: 3.50 – 4.00 = Most Competent (MC); 2.50 – 3.49 = Moderately Competent (MoC); 1.50 – 2.49 = Slightly Competent (SC); 1.00 - 1.49 = Not Competent (NC)

According to the Council of Europe (2020) CEFR CV, B1 learners are "independent users" who can understand the main points of clear standard input on familiar matters and produce simple connected text. Their performance naturally exhibits an asymmetry when structural and core functional elements are stabilized, but

higher-level sociolinguistic adaptability and extended discourse organization remain emerging skills.

From the perspective of the faculty, linguistic communicative competence ranks first (3.24), followed by socio-linguistic with 3.17 mean and ranks second, and pragmatic communicative competences with 3.13 mean and ranks third. All three indicators are interpreted as moderately competent. Faculty evaluations heavily reflect classroom instruction and assessment norms.

From the perspective of the students, socio-linguistic communicative competences rank first with 3.32 mean, then linguistic and pragmatic communicative competences with 3.31 mean at rank 2.5. All three indicators are also interpreted as moderately competent. Students perceive sociolinguistic competences as their strongest area of communicative capability.

Table 5

Relationship Between Implementation of CEFR and Challenges and Barriers in CEFR Implementation

Planning	rho-value	p-value	Interpretation
Relevance	-0.064	0.688	Not Significant
Validity	-0.203	0.197	Not Significant
Transparency	-0.185	0.240	Not Significant
Coherence	-0.144	0.364	Not Significant
Inclusiveness	-0.228	0.146	Not Significant
Sustainability	-0.231	0.141	Not Significant
Delivery			
Relevance	-0.021	0.897	Not Significant
Validity	-0.167	0.291	Not Significant
Transparency	-0.116	0.463	Not Significant
Coherence	-0.17	0.282	Not Significant
Inclusiveness	-0.217	0.168	Not Significant
Sustainability	-0.188	0.234	Not Significant
Evaluation			
Relevance	0.033	0.837	Not Significant
Validity	-0.051	0.748	Not Significant
Transparency	0.017	0.914	Not Significant
Coherence	-0.046	0.774	Not Significant
Inclusiveness	-0.167	0.291	Not Significant
Sustainability	-0.128	0.418	Not Significant

Legend: Significant at p-value < 0.05

Table 5 presents the results of the Spearman rank-order correlation analysis examining the relationship between the implementation of the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) across the dimensions of planning, delivery, and evaluation and the challenges and barriers encountered in its implementation. The challenges and barriers were assessed in terms of relevance and fitness for purpose, validity or alignment, transparency, coherence or internal consistency, inclusiveness or opportunities to make choices, and sustainability or transferability of results. For the planning dimension, all correlation coefficients were negative and weak, ranging from -0.064 to -0.231 . None of the relationships were statistically significant, with p-values ranging from 0.141 to 0.688, all exceeding the 0.05 level of significance. This indicates that the extent of CEFR implementation in the planning phase is not significantly associated with the perceived challenges and barriers. Although the negative coefficients suggest that better planning tends to correspond with fewer perceived barriers, the relationships are too weak to be considered statistically meaningful.

Similarly, for the delivery dimension, the correlation coefficients ranged from -0.021 to -0.217 , indicating very weak to weak negative relationships between CEFR implementation and the identified barriers. All p-values (0.168–0.897) were greater than 0.05, demonstrating that none of the observed relationships were statistically significant. These findings suggest that the manner in which CEFR is delivered does not have a measurable association with the challenges perceived by the respondents.

With respect to evaluation, the correlation coefficients ranged from -0.167 to 0.033, reflecting negligible to very weak relationships. Unlike the planning and delivery dimensions, two coefficients were slightly positive,

while the remaining coefficients were weakly negative. Nevertheless, all p -values (0.291–0.914) were above the 0.05 significance level, indicating that no significant relationship exists between the evaluation practices of CEFR implementation and the perceived barriers. The weak and non-significant correlations imply that evaluation practices may function independently of perceived barriers. This could mean that evaluation is standardized or guided by institutional frameworks rather than being shaped by contextual challenges. Alderson (2005) notes that evaluation in language frameworks like CEFR often operates as a separate dimension, focusing on assessment validity and reliability rather than directly addressing implementation barriers. Moreover, the slightly positive coefficients suggest that in some cases, better evaluation practices may align with fewer perceived barriers. However, the negative coefficients indicate that evaluation might sometimes highlight or reinforce barriers rather than reduce them. Little (2006) argues that CEFR-based evaluation is frequently standardized through institutional policies, making it less sensitive to contextual barriers. This explains why correlations with perceived barriers are weak or negligible.

The absence of statistical significance underscores that evaluation practices are not a decisive factor in shaping perceptions of barriers. This may reflect the limited role of evaluation in overcoming systemic or structural challenges in CEFR implementation.

Table 6*Relationship Between Implementation of CEFR and Communicative Language Competence*

Planning	rho-value	p-value	Interpretation
Linguistic Communicative Competences	.476**	0.001	Significant
Socio-Linguistic Communicative Competences	.337*	0.029	Significant
Pragmatic Communicative Competences	.436**	0.004	Significant
Delivery			
Linguistic Communicative Competences	.603**	0.000	Highly Significant
Socio-Linguistic Communicative Competences	0.27	0.083	Not Significant
Pragmatic Communicative Competences	.531**	0.000	Highly Significant
Evaluation			
Linguistic Communicative Competences	.428**	0.005	Significant
Socio-Linguistic Communicative Competences	.317*	0.041	Significant
Pragmatic Communicative Competences	.314*	0.043	Significant

Legend: Significant at p -value < 0.05

Table 6 presents the results of the Spearman rank-order correlation analysis examining the relationship between the implementation of the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) in terms of planning, delivery, and evaluation and the three dimensions of communicative language competence, namely linguistic, socio-linguistic, and pragmatic communicative competences. For the planning dimension, the results reveal positive and statistically significant relationships with all three dimensions of communicative language competence. Planning demonstrated a moderate positive correlation with Linguistic Communicative Competences ($\rho = 0.476$, $p = 0.001$), a weak positive correlation with Socio-Linguistic Communicative Competences ($\rho = 0.337$, $p = 0.029$), and a moderate positive correlation with Pragmatic Communicative Competences ($\rho = 0.436$, $p = 0.004$). These findings indicate that more effective planning of CEFR implementation is associated with higher levels of learners' communicative language competence across its linguistic, socio-linguistic, and pragmatic dimensions.

The findings emphasize that planning is a critical driver of communicative competence, though its impact varies across dimensions. Richards et al. (2001) argue that effective planning in communicative language teaching ensures coherence between objectives, materials, and assessment, which directly enhances linguistic and pragmatic outcomes. Also, North (2014) emphasizes that CEFR-based planning provides clear descriptors that guide curriculum design, ensuring that linguistic and pragmatic competences are systematically developed. Meanwhile, socio-linguistic competence is more context-dependent, often requiring authentic interaction beyond classroom planning. This explains the weaker correlation observed in your findings (Kasper et al. (2002). Again, Little (2006) highlights that successful CEFR implementation depends heavily on planning, particularly in setting realistic goals and aligning teaching practices with competence descriptors.

For the delivery dimension, the findings indicate varying levels of association with communicative language competence. Delivery exhibited a strong positive and highly significant relationship with Linguistic Communicative Competences ($\rho = 0.603, p < 0.001$), suggesting that effective instructional delivery contributes substantially to learners' linguistic competence. argue that effective delivery in communicative language teaching directly impacts linguistic competence by ensuring learners engage with meaningful input and structured practice. Likewise, delivery demonstrated a moderately strong positive and highly significant relationship with Pragmatic Communicative Competences ($\rho = 0.531, p < 0.001$), indicating that effective implementation during instruction enhances learners' ability to use language appropriately in real-life communicative situations. The moderately strong correlation highlights that delivery also plays a key role in helping learners use language appropriately in real-life contexts. Interactive teaching methods, role plays, and task-based learning foster pragmatic skills. Kasper et al. (2002) emphasize that pragmatic skills can be fostered through interactive classroom delivery, such as role plays and simulations, which mirror real-life communication. This aligns with the moderately strong correlation between delivery and pragmatic competence.

However, the relationship between delivery and Socio-Linguistic Communicative Competences was weak and not statistically significant ($\rho = 0.270, p = 0.083$), implying that instructional delivery alone may not significantly influence learners' socio-linguistic competence, which may also depend on authentic cultural exposure, interaction, and contextual language use. The weak and non-significant correlation implies that socio-linguistic competence (e.g., politeness, register, cultural appropriateness) depends less on classroom delivery and more on authentic exposure to cultural contexts and real-world interaction. Instructional delivery alone may not suffice to develop these nuanced skills. socio-linguistic competence is highly context-dependent, requiring authentic cultural immersion and intercultural communication. This explains why delivery alone shows a weak, non-significant relationship with socio-linguistic competence (Ishihara et al. (2010). North (2014) highlights that CEFR descriptors guide instructional delivery, but socio-linguistic competence often requires supplementary strategies beyond classroom teaching, such as study abroad programs or intercultural exchanges.

Regarding the evaluation dimension, all relationships with communicative language competence were positive and statistically significant. Evaluation demonstrated a moderate positive correlation with Linguistic Communicative Competences ($\rho = 0.428, p = 0.005$) and weak but significant positive correlations with Socio-Linguistic Communicative Competences ($\rho = 0.317, p = 0.041$) and Pragmatic Communicative Competences ($\rho = 0.314, p = 0.043$). These findings suggest that comprehensive and systematic evaluation practices contribute to the development of learners' communicative language competence by providing meaningful feedback, monitoring progress, and informing instructional improvements.

Overall, the findings indicate that implementation of the CEFR is positively associated with communicative language competence. Among the three implementation dimensions, delivery exhibited the strongest relationships, particularly with Linguistic Communicative Competences ($\rho = 0.603$) and Pragmatic Communicative Competences ($\rho = 0.531$), both of which were highly significant. Planning also showed significant positive relationships with all three competence dimensions, while evaluation demonstrated consistent significant positive associations, although of relatively weaker magnitude.

The only non-significant relationship was between delivery and socio-linguistic communicative competences. Overall, these findings support the premise that effective implementation of the CEFR—through systematic planning, quality instructional delivery, and comprehensive evaluation—plays a crucial role in enhancing learners' communicative language competence. Consequently, institutions should continue strengthening CEFR implementation across these dimensions to foster learners' ability to communicate accurately, appropriately, and effectively in diverse communicative contexts.

Table 7 presents the results of the Spearman rank-order correlation analysis examining the relationship between the challenges and barriers in the implementation of the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) and the three dimensions of communicative language competence, namely linguistic, socio-

linguistic, and pragmatic communicative competences. For the challenge dimension Relevance and Being Appropriate/Fit for Purpose, the correlations with Linguistic Communicative Competences ($\rho = 0.069$, $p = 0.665$), Socio-Linguistic Communicative Competences ($\rho = 0.155$, $p = 0.326$), and Pragmatic Communicative Competences ($\rho = -0.096$, $p = 0.544$) were all not statistically significant. These findings indicate that respondents' perceptions of the relevance and appropriateness of CEFR implementation are not significantly associated with any dimension of communicative language competence.

Table 7

Relationship Between Challenges and Barriers in CEFR Implementation and Communicative Language Competence

Relevance	rho-value	p-value	Interpretation
Linguistic Communicative Competences	0.069	0.665	Not Significant
Socio-Linguistic Communicative Competences	0.155	0.326	Not Significant
Pragmatic Communicative Competences	-0.096	0.544	Not Significant
Validity			
Linguistic Communicative Competences	0.008	0.959	Not Significant
Socio-Linguistic Communicative Competences	0.21	0.181	Not Significant
Pragmatic Communicative Competences	-0.069	0.663	Not Significant
Transparency			
Linguistic Communicative Competences	0.013	0.935	Not Significant
Socio-Linguistic Communicative Competences	0.123	0.439	Not Significant
Pragmatic Communicative Competences	-0.061	0.702	Not Significant
Coherence			
Linguistic Communicative Competences	-0.134	0.399	Not Significant
Socio-Linguistic Communicative Competences	0.113	0.478	Not Significant
Pragmatic Communicative Competences	-0.173	0.272	Not Significant
Inclusiveness			
Linguistic Communicative Competences	-0.169	0.285	Not Significant
Socio-Linguistic Communicative Competences	-0.069	0.663	Not Significant
Pragmatic Communicative Competences	-.337*	0.029	Significant
Sustainability			
Linguistic Communicative Competences	-0.098	0.535	Not Significant
Socio-Linguistic Communicative Competences	0.064	0.689	Not Significant
Pragmatic Communicative Competences	-0.177	0.261	Not Significant

Legend: Significant at $p\text{-value} < 0.05$

Similarly, Validity or Alignment exhibited no significant relationships with Linguistic Communicative Competences ($\rho = 0.008$, $p = 0.959$), Socio-Linguistic Communicative Competences ($\rho = 0.210$, $p = 0.181$), and Pragmatic Communicative Competences ($\rho = -0.069$, $p = 0.663$). The weak correlation coefficients suggest that the perceived validity or alignment of CEFR implementation has little measurable influence on learners' communicative language competence. For Transparency or Public Availability of Key Information, the correlations with the three competence dimensions were likewise weak and not statistically significant. Linguistic communicative competence yielded a correlation of $\rho = 0.013$ ($p = 0.935$), socio-linguistic communicative competence $\rho = 0.123$ ($p = 0.439$), and pragmatic communicative competence $\rho = -0.061$ ($p = 0.702$). These results imply that transparency-related barriers do not significantly affect communicative language competence.

The challenge dimension Coherence or Internal Consistency also showed no significant relationships with Linguistic Communicative Competences ($\rho = -0.134$, $p = 0.399$), Socio-Linguistic Communicative Competences ($\rho = 0.113$, $p = 0.478$), and Pragmatic Communicative Competences ($\rho = -0.173$, $p = 0.272$). These findings indicate that perceived issues concerning coherence and internal consistency are not significantly associated with learners' communicative language competence. For Inclusiveness or Opportunities to Make Choices, two of the three relationships were not statistically significant. Specifically, the correlations with Linguistic Communicative Competences ($\rho = -0.169$, $p = 0.285$) and Socio-Linguistic Communicative Competences ($\rho = -0.069$, $p = 0.663$) were weak and not significant. However, a significant negative relationship was found with Pragmatic Communicative Competences ($\rho = -0.337$, $p = 0.029$). This indicates that greater perceived challenges related to inclusiveness and opportunities to make choices are associated with lower levels of pragmatic communicative competence. Although the relationship is weak, it suggests that limited inclusiveness in CEFR implementation

may hinder learners' ability to apply language effectively in authentic communicative situations.

This implies that when learners feel excluded or lack opportunities to make choices in CEFR implementation, their ability to use language effectively in authentic communicative situations is hindered. Pragmatic competence thrives in environments where learners can actively engage, negotiate meaning, and adapt language use to diverse contexts—conditions that inclusiveness directly supports. Inclusive practices, such as learner-centered approaches, opportunities for choice, and culturally responsive pedagogy, provide learners with authentic contexts to practice pragmatic skills. Pragmatic development requires opportunities for learners to make choices and engage in authentic communication. Limited inclusiveness reduces these opportunities, weakening pragmatic growth (Kasper et al., 2002). When inclusiveness is restricted, learners may have fewer opportunities to engage in meaningful interaction, limiting their ability to develop discourse management, politeness strategies, and context-sensitive communication. Cummins (2000) argues that inclusive practices empower learners by validating their identities and providing meaningful participation.

Without inclusiveness, learners may struggle to apply language pragmatically in diverse contexts. The weak correlation suggests inclusiveness is one of several factors influencing pragmatic competence. Other elements, such as exposure to authentic communication and intercultural experiences, also play critical roles. Ishihara et al. (2010) highlight that pragmatic competence develops through authentic interaction and culturally responsive teaching. Barriers to inclusiveness restrict access to such contexts, thereby limiting pragmatic development.

Finally, Sustainability or Transferability of Results showed no statistically significant relationships with Linguistic Communicative Competences ($\rho = -0.098, p = 0.535$), Socio-Linguistic Communicative Competences ($\rho = 0.064, p = 0.689$), and Pragmatic Communicative Competences ($\rho = -0.177, p = 0.261$). These findings indicate that perceived sustainability-related barriers do not significantly influence communicative language competence. Overall, the results reveal that most challenges and barriers in CEFR implementation are not significantly related to communicative language competence. Out of the eighteen correlations examined, only one significant relationship emerged: the negative association between Inclusiveness or Opportunities to Make Choices and Pragmatic Communicative Competences ($\rho = -0.337, p = 0.029$). This finding suggests that when learners perceive fewer opportunities to participate, make choices, and engage inclusively in the learning process, their pragmatic communicative competence tends to be lower. Conversely, the absence of significant relationships across the remaining dimensions indicates that the identified implementation challenges have minimal direct influence on learners' linguistic and socio-linguistic competences. These results imply that while most implementation barriers do not substantially affect communicative language competence, fostering an inclusive learning environment that encourages learner participation and meaningful interaction may be particularly important for developing learners' pragmatic ability to use language effectively in real-world contexts.

CEFR Strategic Framework

The CEFR Implementation Framework for Higher Education Institutions in the Philippines, as depicted in the diagram, presents a comprehensive and multi-layered approach to language education reform, deeply rooted in systems theory and educational ecology. In a recent study, Ricento (2022) emphasizes that for language education policy to be effective, it must address multiple levels within the educational system, a principle that is clearly evident in this framework.

Relationship of the Variables - The four main components - Policy & Standards, Curriculum Alignment, Teacher Training & Development, and Monitoring & Evaluation—are intricately interrelated. Policy and standards set the macro-level requirements and vision. This vision must then be translated at the meso-level into aligned curricula, assessments, and learning materials. Crucially, without teacher training and capacity building at the micro-level, this translation is likely to fail. Finally, a robust monitoring and evaluation system is essential for collecting data that informs necessary adjustments and, through the central "Continuous Improvement" core, fuels an ongoing cycle of refinement.

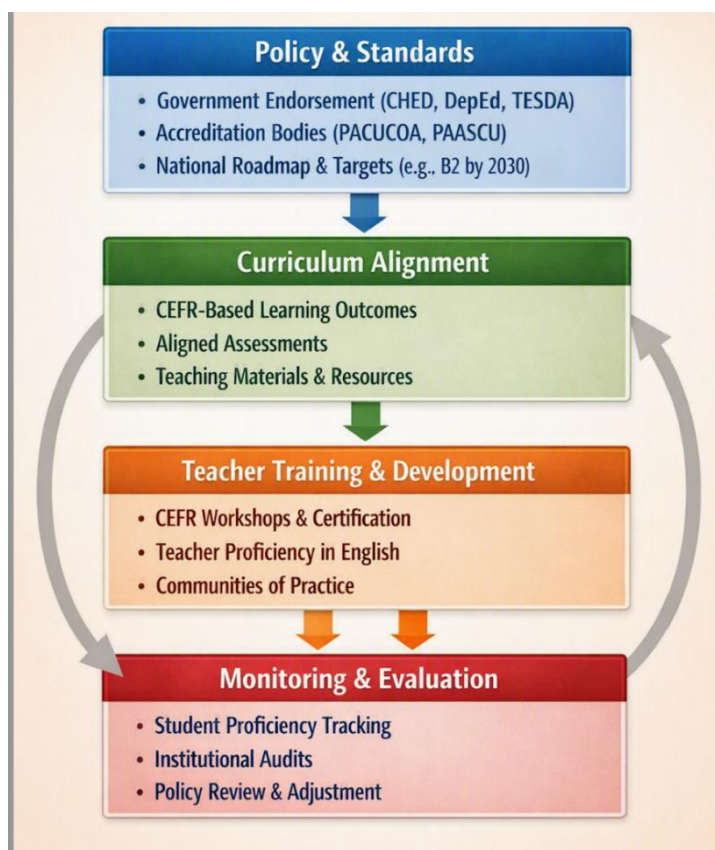


Figure 1: Malimban's CEFR Strategic Framework to Enhance the Implementation and Communicative Competence and Manage the Challenges in Philippines HEIs

Theoretical Analysis of the Framework - Theoretical models of educational change, such as those described by Fullan (2021), highlight the importance of both systemic and capacity-building elements working in concert. The "Policy & Institutional Standards" component reflects the systemic drivers, ensuring a shared purpose and consistent quality standards across all institutions. "Curriculum Alignment" represents the practical application of this systemic vision, essential for ensuring that educational goals are translated into learning experiences. "Teacher Training & Capacity Building" acknowledges that meaningful change relies on the knowledge and commitment of educators, who are the key implementers at the ground level. "Monitoring & Evaluation" incorporates elements of design-based research methodology, which Cobb et al. (2023) argue is vital for evaluating and iteratively improving complex educational interventions.

Functional Operation of the Framework - The functional operation of the framework is based on a holistic, cyclical self-reinforcing flow on CEFR implementation connecting each component into one coherent system. Clear and well-articulated policy standards provide the necessary foundation. These standards guide the creation of curricula, learning materials, and standardized assessments. Comprehensive and ongoing teacher training then equips educators with the skills to deliver these aligned curricula effectively. Continuous student proficiency tracking and institutional audits generate invaluable data that informs the final feedback loop. This cyclical process is driven by the core principle of "Continuous Improvement," which requires all system components to be regularly assessed and adapted based on real-world data and experience. Finally, the arrows and hoops demonstrate that this is not a one-time process but a dynamic cycle, where policy, curriculum, teacher development and evaluation continuously reinforce one another to achieve national language proficiency goals.

Success Indicators and Application to Philippine HEIs - For the successful application of this framework to Philippine HEIs, several key success indicators are essential. Commission on Higher Education (CHED, 2024) guidelines for CEFR implementation emphasize the importance of distinct deliverables at all levels. Key success

indicators would include:

- Macro-Level: Widespread adoption and consistent interpretation of the national CEFR roadmap across institutions. Successful completion of institutional accreditation processes against CEFR standards.
- Meso-Level: A significant increase in the percentage of HEIs with CEFR-aligned syllabi, learning materials, and standardized assessments in language programs.
- Micro-Level: Quantifiable improvements in teacher proficiency benchmarks and a measurable increase in the level of participation in CEFR-related workshops and communities of practice.
- System-Wide: Clear and documented evidence of positive trends in student language proficiency scores over time. Reductions in institutional variation in language proficiency outcomes.

By adhering to this systematic approach and focusing on these tangible success indicators, Philippine HEIs can achieve a truly sustainable and comprehensive enhancement of language education quality.

4. Conclusions and recommendations

In the Philippines, CEFR planning which includes development of communicative language strategies related to the activities concerned in its module/unit aims, selection of communicative aims to create balanced learning modules with a variety of inputs and activities, and use of materials that present language in context is slightly implemented. Meanwhile, CEFR delivery that ensures that tasks are purposeful, meaningful, and collaborative, with a clear goal and product is fully implemented. CEFR evaluation that uses 'Can do' checklists to assess progress at certain 'milestones' like for end of unit or end of term, including self-assessment and/or peer assessment is moderately implemented. CEFR implementation in terms of relevance lacks effective CEFR-based needs analysis that disregards the context's strengths and weaknesses. In terms of validity, it does not use interpretation of CEFR levels in curriculum and assessment aligned to official, international CEFR standards. Then, in terms of transparency, it does not clarify its achievement such as reports, attestations, certificates, etc. while in terms of coherence, it does not use CEFR levels to ensure coherence between curriculum, teaching, and assessment. Subsequently, in terms of inclusiveness, it is unsuccessful in promoting linguistic/cultural diversity, whereas in terms of sustainability, it does not guarantee continued support for structure, resources structure, and modalities. Students, as assessed by their faculty, are moderately competent in their linguistic and socio-linguistic communicative competences. Relatively, both assessed the student's linguistic and socio-linguistic communicative competences as moderately competent. Nevertheless, students assessed themselves as moderately competent in terms of pragmatic communicative competences, differently with faculty. The extent of CEFR implementation across its planning, delivery, and evaluation dimensions is not significantly associated with the perceived challenges and barriers. More so, the relationship between delivery and socio-linguistic communicative competences was not statistically significant. However, there exists a significant negative relationship with pragmatic communicative competences in terms of inclusiveness and perceived challenges and barriers. The design of the strategic enhancement program aimed at improving CEFR curriculum integration for the development of communicative language competence while promoting holistic English language learning aligned with global standards is proposed for review and implementation.

Focus on pre-class structural planning besides systematic and reflective assessment. Quality assurance mechanism for CEFR curriculum integration aiming to standardize communicative competences faculty evaluation criteria and feedback. Redesign collaborative tasks to require explicit register-switching across varied sociocultural contexts. Establish inclusive, psychologically safe spaces using translanguaging scaffolds to build pragmatic confidence. Conduct barrier audits and upskill faculty on explicit, low-resource pragmatic instruction strategies. The proposed strategic program may be considered for CEFR curriculum integration.

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