

Understanding CEFR Language Levels: A Psycholinguistic Study

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ABSTRACT

This research was motivated by the increasingly widespread discussion of CEFR learning methods as a reference for Arabic language learning in Indonesia. A language teaching framework must always be developed in such a way that learning objectives can be achieved. This study focused on the level of understanding rather than the CEFR. This study aims to provide additional insight into academic treasures by reviewing CEFR learning references from a Psycholinguistic point of view. In the psycholinguistic view, it is explained that there are two processes in the mechanism of language in humans, namely receptive and productive, the process of receiving speech and producing speech. At the receiving stage, there will be an understanding process which is categorized by the CEFR as a comprehension level stage consisting of two proficiency activities, namely listening and reading skills. The production process is categorized in the level of speaking and writing proficiency. In addition, the category of foreign languages such as Arabic in the acquisition of language from a psycholinguistic perspective is included in the category of second language acquisition, which is the language mastered by the speaker of a particular language after he has mastered the first language. The approach used in this study is a qualitative approach using document analysis or library research.

Keywords: Psycholinguistic, second language, standar level cefr

INTRODUCTION

The impact of the CEFR has had a profound influence on language policy and has informed language education reform, especially at the curriculum and assessment level in many countries around the world. Research on the terms of reference for language learning with the CEFR approach is increasing from year to year, many researchers are assessing the opportunities and challenges in using this method as a reference in Arabic language learning. However, the use of CEFR for Arabic for Indonesian speakers is still rolling and no reference has been produced with certainty, because each institution still has its own ways motivated by different goals in learning Arabic as a foreign language [1]

Arabic learning in Indonesia emphasizes more on the function of this language as a religious language (lugat ad-dīn) than the function of language as a language of communication (lugat al-mu'āsyarah), so that learning it also has certain special motivations for Arabic learners in Indonesia. These motivations can also be different that characterize each educational institution, some pesantren educational institutions are more dominant in learning Arabic to achieve passive ability and receptive proficiency than active ability and productive proficiency. But now also began to appear modern Islamic boarding schools that not only place Arabic as a religious language, but approach Arabic as the language of communication used daily. The function of Arabic as a religious language is basically an advantage of Arabic compared to other foreign languages. With the increasing

number of functions of Arabic for Indonesian people can be a cause of closeness so that it becomes a necessity for everyone to learn it. This is a challenge for educators and language learners in formulating a curriculum or learning method that is appropriate according to the needs and interests of the Arabic language learners. [2]

Creating a definite frame of reference for Arabic language learners that can be generally applicable and acceptable on an international scale is a beautiful ideal so that the position of Arabic can be grounded for the Indonesian people as its original function for communication facilities not only as a celestial language that can only be mastered by certain people, because this predominantly Muslim population is a necessity for the community to be more get to know Arabic more intimately. In a study it was explained that a person's ability to use language as a medium of communication is the basic key to human success in life. [3]

CEFR as one of the foreign language teaching standards has been widely used globally. It already has a very detailed language component that must be mastered by a language learner. The foundation of its development was also motivated by many strong linguistic factors. Therefore, researchers try to analyze it from a psycholinguistic point of view as an addition to developing knowledge treasures and can open eyes for language policy makers in all educational institutions that it is very important to use a reference framework in language learning.

LITERATURE REVIEW

There are several writings that discuss the importance of implementing CEFR-based Arabic learning in Indonesia, including those written by:

1. Musthofa [4], this study found that CEFR has a positive and significant effect on Arabic learning performance, as measured by students' final grades. This shows that CEFR can improve students' Arabic language skills in various aspects, such as comprehension, production, interaction, and mediation. The CEFR has a positive and significant effect on language policy, as measured by the availability of textbooks, learning media, and language certificates. This suggests that language policies can support the implementation of the CEFR in Arabic language learning.
2. Nurdianto, explained that the CEFR method in its application can provide opportunities and challenges for Arabic language learning in Indonesia. [5] The author emphasizes the importance of the presence of an Arabic learning curriculum for non-Arabic speakers that includes skills, rules, and cultural insights. The author also advises the Indonesian government, professional organizations, and educational institutions to be serious in developing and applying the CEFR to Arabic. In another article, the author explains that the design of the CEFR-based beginner Arabic reading and writing curriculum can have advantages, such as an international standard curriculum, no repetition of material, communicative and applicative, minimizing disagreements in Arabic rules, and can be used in formal and non-formal institutions. In addition, there are also several challenges that must be faced, such as curriculum provision, teacher mastery, availability of materials and media, and government support [6]
3. Riyadi [7], explained that the fact Arabic learners still have difficulties and lack of interest in learning Arabic is due to the learner and the method used, not by the language itself. So using the CEFR method can reduce this because it avoids repetition of material that can make learners feel bored and bored.
4. Another researcher who turned his research into a thesis to obtain a Master's degree at the Faculty of Tarbiyah and Teacher Training UIN Sunan Kalijaga Yogyakarta written by Nurul Khasanah [8] and Ruliana khasanah [9].

In addition, there are also opinions from other researchers who see disadvantages of CEFR, among the many advantages of using this method. Here are some views that see these shortcomings, namely; [10]

- **Lack of consistency:** Some critics consider that the CEFR lacks consistency in determining language proficiency levels, especially at intermediate and advanced levels. This is due to

the lack of clear standards in determining assessment criteria.

- **Limitations in measuring ability:** The CEFR only measures language proficiency in general, regardless of the context or purpose of language use. This can lead to a gap between language skills and language use needs in real situations.
- **Limitations in measuring sociolinguistic aspects:** The CEFR does not take into account sociolinguistic aspects such as dialects, accents, or local culture. This can lead to gaps between language proficiency and language use needs in certain social and cultural contexts.

Its impact on language pedagogy appears to be more limited and inconsistent, due to practitioners' lack of knowledge and experience of this document and lack of adequate training and support. In addition, it has an impact on sociolinguistic and pragmatic competence, a concept that belongs to the construction of broader communicative competence, which refers to the ability to use language appropriately according to social and cultural contexts. This concept is studied in sociolinguistics and pragmatics, and especially in interlingual pragmatics. [11]

METHOD

The methodology used in this study is a qualitative approach using document analysis or library research. Library research is a method of gathering information by exploring various resources available in libraries, such as books, academic journals, magazines, newspapers, and digital databases. This type of research is essential for building a comprehensive understanding of a topic, supporting arguments with credible evidence, and discovering new insights from existing literature.

Learning a second language for language learners is different from the first language, learning Arabic which is a second language for us, so it cannot be separated from the purpose of learning the second language. In the book Psycholinguistics ('sains al-Lughoh an-Nafsi), written by Abdul Aziz [13], there are several stages in acquiring a second language;

1. silent/pre-production period (*al-marḥalah aṣ-ṣāmitah*),
2. Early Production (*Al-Intāj Al-Mubakkir*)
3. speech emergence (*duḥūrul kalām*)
4. Intermediate Fluency (*Aṭ-ṭallāqah al-Mutawaṣiṭah*)
5. Continued Language Development (*An-Namuw al-Muttaṣil/al-Mustamir*)

The learning stage of the level of understanding in the CEFR perspective goes through a process of several stages of levels and exposure of abilities that must be mastered at a certain level, as explained below; [14]

1. At the A1 level or *Mustawa Mubtadi' Awal (Beginner)* the competencies that must be mastered are:
 - a. Understand and use colloquial expressions and very basic expressions

- designed to meet very limited communication needs.
- b. Able to introduce yourself and others, for example doing question and answer activities with detailed questions about someone such as where he lives, people they know, and things he has.
 - c. Able to interact in a simple way in conversation with others slowly and clearly.
2. At level A2 or *Mustawa Muftadi' Tsaniy (Elementary)* the competencies that must be mastered are:
- a. Understand sentences and phrases that are often used in everyday life such as basic information about yourself, family, shopping and local geography.
 - b. Communicate in simple, routine topics that require a simple and direct understanding of familiar, routine matters.
 - c. Explain simply about personality and the surrounding environment as well as matters of urgent need.
3. at level B1 or *Mustawa Mutawasith Tsalits (Intermediate)* competencies that must be mastered are:
- a. Understand the main points of familiar and obvious things, such as business, leisure and school.
 - b. Cope with situations that are most likely to arise while traveling in an area where he speaks the language.
 - c. Write simple texts about familiar or personal themes.
 - d. Describe experiences, events, dreams, hopes, and goals briefly and provide reasons and explanations
4. Level B2 or *Mustawa Mutawasith Rabi' (Upper intermediate)* competencies that must be mastered are:
- a. Understand the main idea of a complex text whether it is an abstract topic or a specific one, including discussion of a particular field.
 - b. Communicate with a level of fluency and spontaneity that makes communication regular with native speakers without pause from either party.
 - c. Produce detailed and clear texts on various topics and explain their point of view on topical issues, provide comments on advantages and disadvantages seen from various aspects.
5. Level C1 or *Mustawa Mutaqadim Khamis (Advanced)* competencies that must be mastered are:

- a. Understand various long texts and analyze their hidden meanings.
 - b. Express himself fluently and spontaneously without looking for many explanatory with various expressions.
 - c. Use Language flexibly and effectively for social, academic and work purposes
 - d. Produce text that provides clear, well-organized and detailed information on complex themes, demonstrating the use of structured and communicative patterns.
6. The highest level is C2 or *Mustawa Mutaqadim Sadis (Proficient)* competencies that must be mastered are:
- a. Easily understand everything that is heard and read.
 - b. Summarizing information from a variety of sources, either by writing, speaking, and presenting in a coherent form.
 - c. Express itself automatically and specifically by distinguishing in detail the meaning of the most complex case

The above stage of language ability is a collection of all language competencies which in its development there are those who divide it into three parts, namely *al-fahmu*, *al-muhādaṣah*, and *al-kitābah*. *Al-fahmu* is divided into two parts, namely *al-istimā'* and *al-qirāah*, while *al-muhādaṣah* is divided into two, namely *at-tafāul al-syafahī* and *al-intāj al-syafahī*, while *kitābah* is divided into only one, namely *kitābah* only. [15]

Table 1. CEFR Language Proficiency Specifications

Language proficiency				
Al-Fahmu (understanding)		Al-Muhādaṣah (talk)		al-Kitābah (writing)
Al-Istimā'	Al-Qirāah	Tafāul al-Shafahī	Al-Intāj al-Shafahī	Kitābah

If the stages of ability described above we divide into the ability of understanding which in this case is *istimā'* only then we can specify in the following table:

Table 2. Language Proficiency in Comprehension Aspects

Language competence in Comprehension aspects	
Level	Capability Description
A1	Understand and use colloquial expressions and very basic expressions designed to meet very limited communication needs slowly and clearly, such as self-introductions, places where he lives, people he knows, and things he has
A2	Understand sentences and phrases that are often used in everyday life such as basic information about yourself, family, shopping and local geography

B1	Understand the main points of familiar and obvious things, such as business, leisure and school
B2	Understand the main idea of complex texts whether they are abstract or specific topics, including discussion of specific fields
C1	Understand a variety of long texts and analyze the hidden meanings of language flexibly and effectively for social, academic, and occupational purposes
C2	Easily understand everything you hear or read

From the description above, if you look carefully, it can be understood that the CEFR contains a descriptive scheme that includes language, language skills and vocabulary presented together as a whole by considering the cognitive, emotional, and socio-cultural levels. [9] If we look at the stage or level of the language learning process between these two perspectives, we can feel a connection. This can prove that the stages of leveling language learning using CEFR are stages that have been adapted to the conditions of the language learner itself and have a wide scope that can be viewed from various perspectives, such as psychology, social, cultural, and so on.

According to a psycholinguistic perspective, second language acquisition as much as possible avoids things that are directly burdensome to learners, namely in the first and second stages how language can be obtained in a silent and early way, with the meaning of introducing materials that are still easy. Material that can be easily understood and captured by language learners can also be by teaching things that in language rules have similarities with the first language they have mastered, so that a sense of ease can be present because basically each language has universal properties that have similarities between one language and another.

The 1st and 2nd stages in the acquisition of this second language when connected with the CEFR frame of reference level are of course at stages A1 and A2 only, the language learner still understands and learns the things around him which of course are well known and familiar to the learner. As for the next stage, namely in stages 3 to 5 is the advanced stage of development results from what has been obtained in the previous stage, even at this stage language learners can produce the results of their understanding in the form of speech or even writing. This when viewed in terms of reference CEFR is already in position B or C. if we make a table it will look like in the following table:

Table 3. Second Language Acquisition: Psycholinguistic Perspectives and CEFR Terms of Reference

<i>Second Language Acquisition Stage</i>	<i>CEFR</i>
silent/pre-production period (<i>al-marḥalah aṣ-ṣāmitah</i>)	A1/A2
Early Production (<i>Al-Intāj Al-Mubakkir</i>)	A1/A2
speech emergence (<i>ḍuhūrul kalām</i>)	B1/B2

Intermediate Fluency (<i>Aṭ-ṭallāqah al-Mutawaṣiṭah</i>)	C1
Continued Language Development (<i>An-Namuw al-Muttaṣil/al-Mustamir</i>)	C2

So it is our task as teachers who can then remap in detail and in more detail in the form of subject matter in class based on the references that have been described so that we cannot avoid things that can burden students such as feelings of burden, boredom, and so on. This can be caused by the repetition of material that often occurs or is not in accordance with the capacity of students.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

There are some points when compared between second language acquisition in psycholinguistics and the standard level of the CEFR are as follows:

1. Definition and Focus

Stages of Second Language Acquisition:

- Definition: The stages in second language acquisition are often based on linguistic and cognitive developmental theories, which explain how individuals learn language naturally.
- Focus: Focus on the cognitive, social, and psychological processes underlying language acquisition, including how factors such as age, motivation, and environment affect learning.

CEFR:

- Definition: The CEFR provides a descriptive framework that defines language skills at various levels of proficiency, from beginner (A1) to advanced (C2).
- Focus: Focus on the description of observable and measurable language skills, including listening, reading, speaking, and writing skills at each level.

2. Stages / Levels

Stages of Second Language Acquisition:

- Early Stages: Learners begin with basic comprehension and production, mastering simple vocabulary and phrases.
- Intermediate Stages: Improved communication skills, encompassing more complex grammatical structures and language use in more diverse contexts.
- Advanced Stages: Fluency and accuracy increase, with a deep understanding of language nuances and the ability to use language in more formal and complex situations.

CEFR:

- A1 (Beginner): A beginner who can use everyday phrases and basic expressions for concrete needs.
- A2 (Elementary): The ability to communicate in simple and routine tasks that require direct exchange of information.
- B1 (Intermediate): The ability to handle most situations that may arise while traveling in the target language area, as well as write simple texts related to familiar topics.

- B2 (Upper Intermediate): Understanding the main idea of a complex text and its interaction with fluency and spontaneity.
 - C1 (Advanced): Flexible and effective use of language for social, academic, and professional purposes.
 - C2 (Proficient): Easy comprehension of almost any text read or heard and self-expression very fluently and precisely.
3. Progress Assessment
- Stages of Second Language Acquisition:
- Assessment: Usually uses qualitative methods such as observation, interviews, and performance analysis in a natural context. Assessments are often longitudinal in nature, looking at changes over time.
 - Indicator: Progress is measured based on improving the ability to understand and use language in real and diverse situations.
- CEFR:
- Scoring: Using standardized tests and clear descriptor-based assessments for each level. Tests such as TOEFL, IELTS, and DELF/DALF are measured based on the CEFR.
 - Indicator: Progress is measured based on the ability to meet specific descriptors at each level, such as the ability to understand certain texts or participate in conversations.
4. Contextual Influences
- Stages of Second Language Acquisition:
- Context: Consider factors such as cultural background, learning environment, and social interactions. Second language acquisition theory emphasizes the importance of real context and language use in everyday situations.
 - Adaptability: More flexibility in adapting to individual needs and contextual variations.
- CEFR:
- Context: Designed to be widely used in a variety of educational and professional contexts in Europe and beyond.
 - Adaptability: Provides a consistent standard for assessing language skills, but may lack flexibility in adapting to local or individual variations.

Then, there are similarities; both systems attempt to measure and describe language skills, and recognize the importance of continuous progress from basic to advanced stages. And so there are the differences; the stages of second language acquisition focus more on the learning process and the factors that influence it, and the CEFR provides specific descriptors and structured assessment tools to measure language skills at a given point.

By understanding both approaches, educators and researchers can integrate insights from the stages of second language acquisition with the CEFR framework to create more effective and holistic language learning strategies

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

Learning a foreign or second language is not a necessity for humans, but the development of science and technology and mobility of humans themselves have encouraged humans to learn other languages after they have mastered the first language. Moreover, for a Muslim who in carrying out his worship activities has the obligation to use Arabic so that like it or not, like it or not if he is a Muslim, he must already know Arabic. Therefore, Arabic for Indonesian people whose majority of people embrace Islam has another function than just for a means of communication as an initial purpose rather than language, namely its function as a religious language for a means of worship. Basically, the duality of the function of Arabic for Indonesian people has a positive impact so that Indonesian people without having to be forced to learn Arabic as a means to carry out worship. However, it can also have a negative impact, namely Arabic is only used for religious language alone without being used as a means of communication, then many people also feel burdened by the duality of these functions so that there is a feeling of difficulty, difficult and even bored and bored to learn more.

It is our task together with the synergy between educators, students, and also the environment in order to reduce these feelings and even eliminate them. So that the positive impact of the duality of the function of Arabic in our society can be felt and surfaced. The familiarity of the Arabic language with the people is not only established because of compulsion but there is a spirit and driven by a deep need. Because basically functioning Arabic as a religious language cannot just let go of its function as a language, which is used for language (communication). Therefore, the use of the CEFR method in language learning is one solution that needs to be tried and developed, with adjustments to the selection of the right material both in terms of the level of ease and difficulty of the material or also adjusted to the mental condition of language learners.

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