

# Are We Presenting Vocabulary Items Properly? The Case of the CEFR-Aligned Malaysian Form 4 English Language Textbook

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## Abstract

Textbooks are the main sources for students to learn vocabulary, a vital aspect of language skills. The study aimed to evaluate how new words had been presented in the Form 4 English Language Textbook in Malaysia. A checklist by Hussin et al. (2016) and semi-structured interviews were employed to gather evaluations from four teachers regarding the subject matter. The analysis showed that the vocabulary presentation in Form 4 was useful, as evidenced by a mean of 3. Furthermore, it was observed that teachers with greater teaching experience expressed higher levels of satisfaction with the presentation of new vocabulary items, while those with less experience exhibited moderate levels of satisfaction. Findings offer insights for teachers, learners, textbook developers, and policymakers on using, developing, and modifying the vocabulary content of the book.

## Keywords

English Textbook, Textbook Evaluation, Vocabulary Items, Checklist

## 1. Introduction

English has established itself as an international lingua franca (Graddol, 2006; Meierkord, 2008), facilitating communication among individuals worldwide, and in response to this global trend, English language education has become a priority in many educational systems, including Malaysia, where it is considered a second language (Sioco & de Vera, 2018). Its widespread use goes beyond native speakers, covering both foreign and second language learning contexts, underscoring its pivotal role in cultural exchange, providing learners with essential access to a

highly interconnected world. Recognizing the pivotal role of English proficiency in ensuring competitiveness on the global stage, the Malaysian Ministry of Education (MOE) embarked on a comprehensive transformation of the education system through initiatives such as the Malaysian Education Blueprint (2013-2025) (MOE, 2012). This blueprint aims to equip Malaysian students with the necessary language skills to thrive in an increasingly interconnected world.

As part of this educational reform, Malaysia has embraced the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) as the guiding framework for English language education (MOE, 2012). The adoption of CEFR-aligned standards has led to significant changes in various aspects of English language teaching, including curriculum, instructional materials, and assessment practices (Kiziltan & Baydal, 2018; Towns, 2020; Roslim et al., 2021). Notably, the introduction of the Standards-Based English Language Curriculum (SBELC) represents a paradigm shift towards a more learner-centered and communicative approach to language learning (MOE, 2012).

Central to the implementation of SBELC is the selection of appropriate instructional materials, particularly textbooks, which serve as primary resources for both teachers and students. Textbooks used in the system which were not developed for CEFR had to be replaced. Due to the shortage of time, books were sourced from European countries where English was second language or foreign language (Aripin & Yusoff, 2022; Shak et al., 2021), and the old set of books were evaluated by many researchers (Rahim & Daghigh, 2019; Mukundan & Kalajahi, 2013) and found to be lacking especially in terms of vocabulary presentation (Kian et al., 2023; Mukundan et al., 2011). However, the investigation of the current book found that the quality and effectiveness of these textbooks, particularly in terms of vocabulary presentation, warrant scrutiny. Vocabulary acquisition is recognized as a cornerstone of language learning, influencing learners' ability to comprehend and express ideas effectively (Alqahtani, 2015; Alfaki, 2015). While English language textbooks frequently serve as the main source for vocabulary learning (Alsaif & Milton, 2012; Jordan & Gray, 2019). There are two approaches to vocabulary acquisition: explicit and incidental learning. Explicit learning requires focused attention on vocabulary, ensuring learners are actively aware of the words they are learning. In contrast, incidental learning occurs as a by-product of engaging with language, where vocabulary acquisition is not the primary focus (Zimmerman, 2014; Criado, 2009). Both approaches emphasize the importance of careful vocabulary selection and presentation in textbooks. Consequently, the presentation of new vocabulary items in textbooks plays a crucial role in facilitating language acquisition and proficiency.

The evaluation of textbooks, including the assessment of vocabulary presentation, is essential for ensuring that instructional materials align with learners' needs and educational objectives (Sheldon, 1988). However, textbook evaluation can be a complex and multifaceted process, requiring systematic criteria and methodologies (Sheldon, 1988). In the Malaysian context, the adoption of foreign textbooks, such

as “Full Blast” from Oxford University Press, has sparked debate and raised questions about their suitability and alignment with local educational goals (Sani, 2018). Despite the significance of textbooks in language education, limited research has been conducted on the presentation of new vocabulary items in Malaysian secondary school textbooks (Hussin et al., 2016). This highlights the need for further investigation into the quality and effectiveness of vocabulary presentation in CEFR-aligned textbooks used in Malaysian classrooms.

Therefore, this study aims to fill this research gap by evaluating the presentation of new vocabulary items in the Form 4 English Language Textbook. Through a systematic assessment, this research seeks to provide insights into the strengths and weaknesses of vocabulary presentation in CEFR-aligned textbooks, thereby informing curriculum development and instructional practices in Malaysian secondary schools.

More specifically, it aimed to answer the following two research questions:

- 1) How do the teachers evaluate the presentation of the new vocabulary items in the Form 4 English Language textbook based on the checklist?
- 2) What are the teachers’ perceptions on possible ways to improve the presentation of new vocabulary in the textbook based on the results of the interview?

## 2. Literature Review

### 2.1. Textbook and Textbook Evaluation

Textbooks play a fundamental role in language teaching, providing a structured framework for educators and learners (Prabhu, 1987). They serve as crucial resources for conveying knowledge and supporting teachers in achieving educational objectives (Ridwan et al., 2021). Additionally, they offer a systematic approach to language instruction, fostering self-directed learning among both teachers and students (Ellis, 1997). Textbook evaluation operates at three levels: pre-use, in-use, and post-use (Cunningsworth, 1995; Ellis, 1997). Pre-use evaluation, also known as predictive evaluation, forecasts the potential performance of content for future use (Litz, 2005; McGrath, 2002; Tomlinson, 2010). In-use evaluation, or retrospective evaluation, assesses materials currently in use, while post-use evaluation reflects on the effects of materials on users (Litz, 2005; McGrath, 2002; Tomlinson, 2010). Cunningsworth (1995) proposed two main methods for textbook evaluation: general impression evaluation and in-depth evaluation. Studies have evaluated textbooks to determine how exercises align with syllabi and learners’ needs, identify strengths and weaknesses in textbooks, and conduct action research (McDonough & Shaw, 1993; Cunningsworth, 1995). Others assess whether textbooks effectively convey knowledge, evaluate their productivity and value, or examine their suitability for students’ needs, teaching objectives, and methodology in specific contexts (Sarem et al., 2013; Salehi et al., 2015; Hanifa, 2018). Ultimately, evaluations aim to enhance the quality of textbooks and instructional practices. Most research focuses on evaluating a series of textbooks or conducting a comparative evaluation between textbooks using a checklist (Johar

& Azia, 2019; Sedaghatgoftar, 2022), especially from the perspective of teachers.

In Malaysia, textbooks are authored by specialists and approved by the government, as in many developing countries. Evaluating textbooks in use can provide practical recommendations for curriculum development and instructional improvement.

## 2.2. CEFR and Textbook Evaluation

The Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR), acting as “a common basis for the elaboration of curriculum guidelines, language syllabuses, textbooks, examinations, etc.” (Council of Europe, 2001) was developed to establish international standards of textbooks, assessment, teaching and learning of language (Uri & Aziz, 2018), ensuring they support a structured progression from A1 (basic user) to C2 (proficient user) proficiency levels.

Therefore, continuous evaluation and adaptation of textbooks are essential to ensure they meet CEFR standards and address the broader sociocultural dynamics of language use in a global context (Al-Jarf & Mingazova, 2020; Karababa & Sarac-Suzer, 2010; Khodadady & Samavarchi, 2016). Also, in 2018, Malaysian educational institutions incorporated the CEFR structure into their English as a Second Language (ESL) curriculum which calls for the evaluation of CEFR-aligned textbooks in Malaysia (Johar & Aziz, 2019; Rahim & Daghigh, 2019; Aripin & Yusoff, 2022; Shak et al., 2021).

## 2.3. Evaluation of Vocabulary in Textbooks

According to Schmitt, Schmitt, and Clapham (2001), vocabulary items are thought of as linguistic building blocks. And textbooks are the primary sources for learning vocabulary. Previous studies which were corpus-based studies (Alsaif & Milton, 2012; Eldridge & Neufeld, 2009; O’Loughlin, 2012; Rahmat & Coxhead, 2021) revealed the extent of deficiencies in vocabulary loading and distribution patterns and the ignorance of publishers and textbook writers on the importance of linking usage to established wordlists, like the GSL and the Oxford 3000 (which indicate the most frequently used words in the English language. The textbooks not only broke rules in terms of frequency of use (according to wordlists), they also lacked in terms of pedagogical efficiency, like that of repetition and recycling of words which help with recall of words (Thornbury, 2006).

## 2.4. Problems in Vocabulary Presentation in Malaysian Textbooks

Past studies using checklist have done and found some deficiencies in vocabulary presentation in Malaysian textbooks.

Aripin & Yusoff (2022) examined the vocabulary content in the Super Minds (Student’s Book 1) used for teaching English in Malaysian public schools. It surveyed 180 primary school teachers to assess the textbook’s content, physical, and overall quality, specifically focusing on vocabulary usage and appropriateness. Results indicated average to good ratings for content and physical quality, with

moderate overall quality. A notable outcome was the development of a comprehensive rating scale for textbook evaluation, including criteria related to vocabulary usage and relevance.

Bakar & Ismail (2021) explored the presentation of vocabulary items in the Year 5 English language textbook “English Plus1” used in Malaysian schools and found the textbook does an excellent job of presenting vocabulary, but no particular approach was used to teach the new vocabulary, and there was no glossary of the new vocabulary at the end of the textbook.

## 2.5. Studies Done Outside Malaysia

Furthermore, Chujo (2004) conducted a study to compare the vocabulary levels of Japanese junior and senior high school texts, Japanese college qualification tests, English proficiency tests, and EGP, ESP, and semi-ESP college textbooks. Alsaif and Milton (2012) highlighted the issue of very little vocabulary uptake by English as a foreign language (EFL) learner in public schools in Saudi Arabia. While factors such as teaching methodology and learner motivation have been suggested to explain this, the vocabulary input received by these learners remains uninvestigated. Hussin et al. (2016) evaluated the presentation of new vocabulary items in the Form Three English language textbook used in Malaysian secondary schools. The purpose of this study is to describe the types of vocabulary tasks in EFL textbooks.

Taimoor et al. (2021) undertook a comparative assessment of English textbooks utilized in Intermediate-level education within Pakistan and Saudi Arabia. Employing corpus linguistics methodology, the research scrutinized the vocabulary content of these textbooks, specifically concentrating on corpus size, word types, and adherence to CEFR vocabulary standards. The findings revealed notable deficiencies in vocabulary coverage across both contexts, with Pakistani textbooks generally demonstrating a more expansive corpus and richer vocabulary compared to their Saudi Arabian counterparts. In addition, Yanuar (2022) conducted a study to outline the types of vocabulary tasks found in EFL textbooks, particularly focusing on “English on Sky 1” for Junior High School students. The studies’ results indicate a diverse range of task types, with varying emphasis on different cognitive skills such as analysis, knowledge acquisition, comprehension, application, and evaluation. Lower-order thinking skills, specifically synthesis and evaluation, constitute a smaller portion of the analyzed data.

Therefore, the evaluation of new vocabulary items in an in-use course book such as Form 4 in Malaysia will help users have a better understanding of the weaknesses and strengths of the vocabulary presentation of the textbook, inform future revisions of the textbook, and then contribute to the improvement of English language education in the region.

## 3. Methodology

The study employed a descriptive case study design, gathering and analyzing

qualitative data from the evaluation checklist and follow-up interviews. Our research can be categorized as an in-use textbook evaluation study (Ellis, 1997). We used multiple methods (textbook evaluation checklist and semi-structured interviews) to collect our data.

### 3.1. Participants

A total of 4 ESL teachers were chosen via purposive sampling technique. They are selected from two secondary schools located in Kemaman, a district in the state of Terengganu, Malaysia. The expert participants were selected based on their availability and accessibility. And the criterion for recruiting teachers in the study were as follows: firstly, they were all ESL teachers with more than two or three years of experience teaching English to secondary school students; secondly, they held a bachelor's degree or higher in TESL or a related English field, and had experience teaching English to Form 4 students using the textbook; thirdly, they were experienced-teachers in teaching *Full Blast Plus 4* textbooks and were actively involved in using the targeted textbook.

### 3.2. The Textbook

The designated textbooks of Form 4, *Full Blast Plus 4* published in 2020 by MM Publications, will be analyzed. The Student's Book is composed of eight modules that integrate the development of the four language skills (reading, listening, speaking, writing) with the presentation and practice of vocabulary and grammatical structures.

### 3.3. Instruments

The data of the present study were collected through an adapted checklist for vocabulary items. The checklist that we adapted in this study came from Hussin et al. (2016), who also adapted it from another instrument developed by Nimehchisalem and Mukundan (2015). The checklist was chosen for its clarity and comprehensibility in evaluating vocabulary in textbooks. Also, a new item (Item 12: Introduction of online applications for learning vocabulary in the textbook and the reason for its inclusion) was added by the researchers. **Appendix 1** shows the final version of the checklist that we used for data collection in the current study.

Furthermore, semi-structured interviews, with a high level of validity and reliability (Goodarzi et al., 2021), were used to delve into participants' beliefs, perspectives, and opinions regarding the presentation of vocabulary in the textbook. The four questions (**Appendix 2**) were based on a questionnaire developed by Ngu & Aziz (2019), which are about the respondents' perspectives on professional development, curriculum, and teaching and learning in the CEFR-aligned curriculum. The interviews were recorded and transcribed. The themes that emerged from the interviews were then analyzed to answer the research questions.

### 3.4. Data Collection Procedures

Data collection procedures were carried out in about one month (May 2023). Two secondary schools (as mentioned above) were purposefully choosing where the *Full Blast Plus 4* textbook was the main course book. The adapted checklist was distributed among the 4 English teachers in PDF form on WhatsApp. Before they filled out the checklist, the researcher explained the general terms and asked for any comments on any items that may be presented in the Comments Section. The evaluators had plenty of time to respond to each question separately. Then, evaluators participated in the interviews via WhatsApp after the checklist was completed. The interview section was downloaded and transcribed.

### 3.5. Data Analysis Procedures

In the first stage, the current checklist was scored on the 5-point Likert scale, ranging from “totally lacking”, “poor”, “satisfactory”, “good”, and “excellent”. In the second stage, the data collected from the semi-structured interviews with the expert participants was analyzed using thematic analysis. This method helped to identify and categorize patterns, themes, and ideas that emerged from the participants’ comments.

## 4. Results

### 4.1. Demographic Results

**Table 1** presents the descriptive data for the demographic features of the evaluators ( $n = 4$ ), aged between 29 and 45. All of the evaluators taught at a secondary school in Kemaman, Terengganu. They hold a bachelor’s degree in TESL. The evaluators’ teaching experience ranged from 3 to 23 years, with an average of around 11 years.

**Table 1.** Demographic information.

Evaluator	Age	Level of Education	Teaching Experience
Mardhiah	29	BA (TESL)	3
Fatin	32	BA (TESL)	7
Huda	37	BA (TESL)	10
Fizah	45	BA (TESL)	23

### 4.2. Teachers’ Evaluation of the Textbook

Having collected the required data, the researcher reported the data of evaluators’ perception of the new vocabulary items in Form 4 through descriptive analysis. **Table 2** shows the teachers’ evaluation of each item.

As **Table 2** shows, the mean score for the vocabulary load was 3.8 (items 1 and 3), which means that the vocabulary load in the Form 4 English Language textbook was at a proper linguistic level and had good distribution. Also, evaluators

rated the textbook's easy and difficult terms as remarkably balanced, and the wordlist/index of the vocabulary is clearly distributed ( $M = 3.5$ ). Meanwhile, the mean of visuals and introduction of online vocabulary learning applications ranked the lowest ( $M = 2$ ).

**Table 2.** Evaluation of vocabulary items in the textbook.

No	Item (criteria)	Mardhiah	Fatin	Huda	Fizah	Mean
1	Appropriate load of new words	4	3	4	4	3.8
2	Balanced presentation of simple and complex words	3	3	4	4	3.5
3	Distribution of vocabulary across the book	4	4	3	4	3.8
4	Recycling New words across the book	2	3	4	2	2.8
5	Contextualization of new words	1	4	3	3	2.8
6	Effective use of visuals to present new words	1	2	3	2	2
7	Meaningful vocabulary exercises	3	3	3	4	3.3
8	Balanced distribution of new words in each unit	2	3	3	4	3
9	Teaching new words using appropriate methods	2	2	3	3	2.5
10	Using new words in comprehensible sentences and examples	3	3	3	4	3.3
11	Presence of an index of new words at the end of the book	4	3	3	4	3.5
12	Introduction of online applications for learning vocabulary in the textbook	2	2	2	2	2

Key: 0.00 - 0.80 (Negligible usefulness), 0.81 - 1.60 (Low usefulness), 1.61 - 2.80 (Moderate usefulness), 2.81 - 3.60 (High usefulness), and 3.61 - 4.00 (Very high usefulness).

To be specific, for item 1, the majority of evaluators, with an average score of 3.8, found the load was appropriate for the students. All but one evaluator rated item 1 with a score of 4. The mean score of 3.5 for item 2 indicated that the evaluators perceived a balanced mix of easy and difficult terms in the textbook. Mardhiah and Fatin found an adequate balance, while evaluators 3 and 4 found the mix to be significantly satisfactory. [Dakhi & Fitria \(2019\)](#) emphasized this balance in ESL textbooks. Regarding item 3, Mardhiah, Fatin, and Fizah felt that the word load was adequately distributed across each chapter. Meanwhile, Huda ranked 3 for the distribution of vocabulary load across the whole book. They appeared satisfied with the placement of new vocabulary items because they believed students would learn and utilize the terms well in each chapter. The vocabulary load in each chapter is appropriate for the students' level with a mean of 3.8. Also, Mardhiah and Fizah are of the opinion that the repetition of new words for delayed recall across the book (item 4) is decent. However, Fatin and Huda believed that the repetition of new words for delayed recall across the book is fine and of the highest standard. With an average score of 2.8, evaluators found moderate usefulness in contextualizing new words. While Mardhiah ranked it as 1, most evaluators agreed (ranked 3 or 4) that contextualization was adequate, supporting [Rapaport \(2004\)](#) and [Ismail et al. \(2017\)](#). The average score of 2 on item 6 suggests

the textbook's moderate effectiveness in using visuals. Mardhiah and Huda ranked it as poor and good, respectively. This aligns with [Ismail et al.'s \(2017\)](#) emphasis on visuals in ESL textbooks. The topical nature of the exercises is being ranked as up to standard by the Mardhiah, Fatin, and Fizah. Three of the evaluators were satisfied whereas Fizah was very satisfied with the topical nature of the vocabulary exercises, which allowed for useful enrichment of vocabulary items ([Nation, 2001](#)). The mean score for this item is 3.3. For item 8, Fizah ranked 4 and really agreed that the new lexical items (item 8) appear in each unit. The other evaluators agreed and moderately agreed; good and satisfactory. Huda and Fizah ranked item 9 (There is a specific method to teach new vocabulary) 4 and in the same opinion that there is a specific method to teach new vocabulary in the textbook; Mardhiah and Fatin ranked this criterion 2. The evaluators all concluded that the textbook satisfactorily defined the approach for teaching new terms. Moreover, Mardhiah, Fatin, and Huda rated the sentences and examples defining new vocabulary as good, while Fizah ranked it as excellent. This finding aligns with [Hussin et al.'s \(2016\)](#) study, which deliberated that sentences and examples that define new vocabulary presented in ESL textbooks are familiar to the learners. Regarding item 11, both Mardhiah and Fizah highly agreed that there is an index of new vocabulary at the end of the textbook. Meanwhile, Fatin and Huda ranked 3 for item 11. This result was consistent with [Hussin et al. \(2016\)](#) results that the index in ESL textbooks is essential to identifying new words used in each unit for both teachers and learners. What's more, all 4 evaluators moderately believed the textbook introduces online applications for learning vocabulary, all ranking it as 2 for the last item.

**Table 3.** Overall evaluation of vocabulary items in the textbook.

Evaluator	Total score (items 1-12)	Mean score
Mardhiah	31	2.58
Fatin	35	2.92
Huda	38	3.2
Fizah	40	3.3
Total Mean	36	3

Key: 0.00 - 0.80 (Negligible usefulness), 0.81 - 1.60 (Low usefulness), 1.61 - 2.80 (Moderate usefulness), 2.81 - 3.60 (High usefulness), and 3.61 - 4.00 (Very high usefulness).

**Table 3** illustrates that Mardhiah found the new vocabulary items were presented in the textbook in a moderately helpful manner, which could be beneficial for students' learning. The evaluator's ratings ranged from 2 (low) to 4 (high), generally commending the inclusion of new vocabulary in the textbook.

Meanwhile, the other three evaluators regarded the presentation of new vocabulary items in the textbook as highly beneficial for students' learning, assigning scores of 3 (high) and 4 (very high). They valued the approach to presenting new

vocabulary in the textbook.

The vocabulary was particularly relevant to evaluators 2, 3, and 4, who possessed higher teaching experience, and they consistently rated the textbook as useful. In contrast, Mardhiah, with moderate teaching experience, found the textbook's presentation of new vocabulary moderately valuable for students' acquisition ( $M = 2.58$ ). This evaluator likely rated the criteria as 2 (moderate) or 3 (highly useful). Overall, experienced teachers expressed high satisfaction with the textbook's introduction of new terminology, perceiving it as easily comprehensible for students. Conversely, less experienced teachers (such as Mardhiah and Fatin) found the inclusion of new words slightly challenging for students, leading to struggles in teaching new vocabulary effectively.

Thus, the most notable aspect of the data presented in the table is the average item score of 36, indicating a mean score of 3, suggesting that evaluators considered the vocabulary highly useful ( $M = 3$ ).

This data indicates that the textbook effectively introduces new vocabulary items. Furthermore, a correlation is observed between evaluators' teaching experience and mean scores. Higher teaching experience correlates with higher mean scores. For instance, Fizah, with 23 years of experience, rated the highest scores among all evaluators, while Mardhiah, with 3 years of experience, rated the lowest scores. Additionally, English teaching experience influenced the research findings, suggesting that experienced evaluators are more attuned to student needs. Hence, collaboration among teachers of varying experience levels is crucial for enhancing vocabulary learning.

### 4.3. Interview

Follow-up interviews were conducted after the participants finished the checklist. The analysis of the interview led to a thematic analysis regarding the expert participants' views on the presentation of vocabulary items in the textbook.

### 4.4. Suggestions for Improving Vocabulary Presentation

When asked about potential enhancements to vocabulary presentation in the textbook, the four evaluators offered distinct suggestions. Fatin agreed that the current presentation of vocabulary is good with a word index to help guide teachers on which words to cover. Visual connections with vocabulary presentation were proposed by Huda and Fizah. Huda proposed linking content to audio or video resources as an essential improvement strategy. Fizah thought matching and filling in the blanks were good activities for doing vocabulary. And more graphics or pictures can be used to enhance students' understanding. Mardhiah further elaborated:

"I think the vocabulary can be improved if the root words are included as well since words with prefixes or suffixes may change the nature of the words. For example, 'damage' is a verb in the present tense but 'damaged' can both be a verb in the past tense or an adjective. There are some parts where it includes some notes for the root words, but sometimes the explanation is quite confusing for low-

proficiency pupils. It's also much easier to learn vocabulary when pupils can relate it with real-life context. This can be done by asking them to practice the vocabulary by re-enacting some situations in their daily life, or at least by showing them video clips or pictures."

#### **4.5. Exploring Effective Teaching Methods for Vocabulary Enhancement**

Also, the participants were asked to introduce the teaching methods they use or create to improve students' vocabulary knowledge based on the lessons in the textbook. Various strategies are employed for this purpose. Primarily, reading, agreed by the 4 evaluators, serves as a key method to reinforce vocabulary understanding. Faizah also advocates for reading with context or contextual clues. Fatin highlights the importance of understanding contextual meanings to grasp word usage effectively. Additionally, Mardhiah organizes reading sessions where students reenact significant parts of texts in small groups. Vocabulary errors prompt correction, repetition, and dictionary use, which is fundamental in second language acquisition. She elaborated:

"I usually ask the pupils to re-enact the important part of the article/story if we're having reading lessons. I'll put them in a few small groups and each group needs to re-enact the scenes based on their own understanding first. If they make mistakes in explaining the vocabulary, I will correct them and ask them to do it again. But most of the time, I will ask my pupils to consider me their last resort. This means that they have to use their dictionary to find the meaning of the words since it's a part of the learning tool necessary for learning a second language."

#### **4.6. Perspectives on Using CEFR-Aligned Textbooks**

Furthermore, the participants were asked about their overall perception of using the CEFR-aligned textbook. Most respondents agreed that these textbooks are convenient and significantly helpful resources, echoing Huda's sentiment. Fizah also noted their usefulness as comprehensive reference materials. Also, Fatin proposed that the CEFR-aligned textbook is really helpful to pupils, especially in terms of how easy it is to use as well as the topic covered. In addition, the CEFR-aligned textbook explicitly covers all skills as well as the suitable vocabulary used for each skill.

However, Mardhiah slightly disagreed as the teacher poses challenges due to the lack of resources and exposure for some students in suburban areas, resulting in students being unfamiliar with certain textbook themes like globetrotting. She added:

"Since I'm teaching at a school in a rural area, I would say that the CEFR-aligned textbook is quite challenging for my pupils. As compared to pupils in the city with plenty of resources and exposure, some of my pupils here are not familiar with some themes/topics in the textbooks. For example, in chapter 5, they couldn't relate to the topic of globetrotting, so there were times they got quite bored during the lesson. So as a teacher, I have to play my part in creating interesting and fun

lessons.”

Therefore, it is important to create interesting and fun lessons to engage the students according to the EFL/ESL teachers by adding multi-media or role play (Nation, 2001).

#### 4.7. Comments on Current Textbooks’ Enhancements of Vocabulary

Finally, the participants were asked about their perception of whether the current textbook better helps develop students’ English language vocabulary compared to previous textbooks. Most of the teachers, except Mardhiah, who is a novice and unfamiliar with the previous textbooks, expressed a preference for the current textbook, citing its efficacy in vocabulary development. This finding corroborates the results of the evaluation checklist, indicating overall satisfaction among teachers, with more experienced teachers rating the textbook more favorably. Also, according to Huda, the current textbook is more detailed and relatable to the current situations. Fizah added the current textbook is more interesting. The contents chosen are much more related to students’ life and the articles used are all interesting in telling the students new things that they should know. What’s more, Fatin thought the current textbook provides knowledge from other countries’ contexts, which allows students to learn general knowledge and language use. Here are her words: Taking into consideration that English is a widely used language, it is crucial for pupils to learn the vocabulary in different contexts, i.e., outside Malaysia’s context. While the previous textbook focuses on Malaysia’s context, the current textbook gives knowledge from other countries’ contexts after the implementation of the CEFR framework in Malaysia (Rahim & Daghigh, 2019). Pupils can learn general knowledge as well as the use of language itself.

### 5. Discussion

Vocabulary knowledge plays a fundamental role in language acquisition and serves as an important indicator of language skill development and proficiency (Viera, 2017). The textbook’s presentation of new vocabulary, according to Nimehchisalem & Mukundan (2015) should be appropriate and align with students’ needs. Vocabulary items in the textbook were evaluated by Form 4 English teachers using an evaluative checklist for new vocabulary items. While one teacher had 23 years of experience, the remaining three had substantial experience in English language teaching. Survey results indicated that experienced evaluators generally found the new terminology suitable for students, with only one teacher expressing moderate satisfaction. None of the four teachers believed the introduction of new vocabulary items was extremely useful.

The teachers contend that the way the new words are presented in the textbook is appropriate for Malaysian Form 4 students since the new words were presented in a contextualized manner, allowing students to better understand the meaning and usage of the words. In addition, most of the teachers pointed out the suitability

of the items for the vocabulary load of new words in each lesson relies on students' competence. Mardhiah, Huda, and Fizah rated the items as extremely suitable for students' linguistic levels, while Fatin rated them as suitable. Furthermore, most of the evaluators agreed that the mix of basic and complicated terms was high. They appeared pleased with the item because the vocabulary in textbooks is organized in descending order of difficulty according to the students' level. Also, the distribution of vocabulary load across the entire book was graded as high as well because the overall content of the textbook meets the students' context of difficulty. This fits well into compliance with the pedagogy of language teaching which supports the  $i + 1$  principle (Krashen, 1992), which means the textbook provides learners with input (language/knowledge) that is just slightly beyond their current level of competence, where "i" represents the learner's current level of language ability, and "+1" represents the next step in language complexity.

Moreover, evaluators noted sufficient repetition of new terms throughout the text, aiding delayed remembering through recycling activities. This approach facilitates retrieval and creative use of vocabulary, allowing students to broaden their vocabulary range and retain terms for long-term use (Nimehchisalem & Mukundan, 2015). Similarly, contextualization of new words was rated as average, with visuals highlighted as crucial aids in vocabulary recall (Ismail et al., 2017).

In terms of contextualization of new words, the presentation of vocabulary was graded as high. In each lesson, students are given assignments to help them interpret meaning from context. These activities are sufficient to help students build and expand their vocabulary knowledge. It was also determined that, with the exception of one who considered the textbook's presentation of the new words to be moderate, the evaluators were satisfied with the way in which the new vocabulary was presented in the textbook. The vast majority agreed that the new vocabulary should be introduced in a variety of ways to pique learners' interest in learning it. Furthermore, most evaluators thought that new vocabulary items were presented in each part of the textbook. Teachers should investigate the most effective methods for teaching each lexical item to their students.

In addition, the evaluators appreciated the manner in which there is a precise method that they may use as a guide to introduce the new vocabulary to the students. The new vocabulary was taught in the same way in each unit. Finally, evaluators expressed satisfaction with the indexation of new vocabulary that had been presented towards the end of the textbook. Finally, the evaluators expressed slight satisfaction that the textbook introduces online applications for learning vocabulary. All in all, the textbook was found to meet the requirements for a good and useful English textbook, notably in terms of vocabulary.

To conclude, the study shows a high usefulness of the presentation of new words in the textbook, with a mean score of 3. The evaluators believe the distribution of the new vocabulary will benefit Form 4 students due to contextualized presentation throughout the book, enhancing understanding and usage. Also, they praised the way the load of new words is relevant to the linguistic level of

the students, which will be helpful for students to utilize the words in their daily lives. Although the presentation of vocabulary in the textbook is useful, there is still room for the textbook to be improved. The Ministry of Education of Malaysia and the curriculum developers can provide a guideline on how to introduce new terminology to students (Nimehchisalem & Mukundan, 2015), aiding teachers in varying lessons and engaging students with interesting activities. Additionally, teachers can supplement classroom materials with newspapers, magazines, and music, and utilize technology like Quizzlet, Kahoot, and Canva to enhance language learning engagement. Not only that, teachers' collaboration can increase their ability to evaluate and enhance classroom practice (Briscoe & Peters, 1997). Collaboration among teachers means teachers focus on improving their instructional quality (Visscher & Witziers, 2004). Teachers can better understand how to design learning materials, share each other's resources, and develop new teaching methods when they work in collaboration (Doppenberg et al., 2012; Little, 2002). Future studies, particularly as Malaysia transitions to the CEFR, can further explore vocabulary requirements in English textbooks to better inform teaching practices.

## 6. Conclusion

The purpose of the study was to evaluate the presentation of new words in an English language teaching textbook in Malaysia. The results revealed a high level of effectiveness in the way new words had been presented in the textbook, as indicated by the overall mean score of 3. Consequently, the textbook proves to be useful in the presentation of new vocabulary items in the textbook. Additionally, there is a correlation between teachers' satisfaction with the presentation of new vocabulary items and their level of teaching experience, with more experienced teachers expressing higher satisfaction.

Given the significance of vocabulary development in the growth of the four learning skills, further research can be conducted by using or adapting additional instruments, such as checklists or questionnaires, to assess different vocabulary needs. This would make it easier to determine the suitability of new words in each year's secondary English textbook, thereby helping teachers in planning their vocabulary instruction more effectively. Such efforts are likely to influence and refine the methods by which teachers introduce new vocabulary in the classroom. Meanwhile, more future studies may focus on the presentation and evaluation of vocabulary presentation and selection in textbooks in different subjects and backgrounds covering a larger number of evaluators.

## Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

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## Appendix

### Appendix 1: Checklist for Evaluating New Vocabulary Presentation in Form 4 Malaysian English Textbooks (Adapted from Hussin et al., 2016)

#### Introduction:

This checklist has been developed to help you evaluate the presentation of new vocabulary items in Malaysian English Language Textbooks.

#### Background information

- 1) Age: ..... years
- 2) Level of education:  
☐ Diploma ☐ BA ☐ MA ☐ PhD
- 3) Teaching experience: ..... years
- 4) Textbook title: .....

#### Instructions:

Read the items below carefully and mark the appropriate number that best describes your evaluation of the textbook:

- 0) Totally lacking
- 1) Poor
- 2) Satisfactory
- 3) Good
- 4) Excellent

If you have any further comments about each item, you may leave your notes in the “*Comments*” column.

After calculating the mean score, you can interpret it using the Scores Interpretation Guide below the checklist.

#	Item	0	1	2	3	4	Comments
1.	The load (number of new words in each lesson) is appropriate to the linguistic level of students.						
2.	There is balance of simple and complex words.						
3.	Good distribution of vocabulary load across the whole book.						
4.	New words are repeated across the book for delayed recall.						
5.	New words are contextualized.						
6.	Visuals have been used effectively to present the new vocabulary.						
7.	The topical nature of the vocabulary exercises is often meaningful to the students.						
8.	New lexical items appear in each unit.						
9.	There is specific method to teach new vocabulary.						
10.	The sentences and examples that define new vocabulary use words that are known by learners.						
11.	There is an index of new vocabulary at the end of the textbook.						
12.	The textbook introduces online applications for learning vocabulary.						

### Scores Interpretation Guide

Level	Range	Interpretation
0	0.00 - 0.80	Negligible usefulness
1	0.81 - 1.60	Low usefulness
2	1.61 - 2.80	Moderate usefulness
3	2.81 - 3.60	High usefulness
4	3.61 - 4.00	Very high usefulness

### Appendix 2: Interview Questions

- 1) In your opinion, how is it possible to improve the way vocabulary is presented in the textbook?
- 2) What are the teaching methods that you use or create to improve students' vocabulary knowledge (based on the lessons in the textbook)?
- 3) How do you feel about using the CEFR-aligned textbook?
- 4) In comparison with the previous textbooks, do you think the current textbook better helps develop students' English language vocabulary? Why or why not?