



Students' Perspective of Common European Framework of Reference in Kosovo

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Abstract

Communication is the main goal people learn languages and for this reason many researchers and scholars have conducted research on teaching and learning second/foreign languages. Research has shown that the learning route is the same but it depends on the difficulty of the language and the type of learner as well as learners' abilities for languages. The opportunities people have to visit different places came up the need of having a standard of knowledge toward specific language, in our case English language. Between years 1993-1996, the European Council came up with the idea of CEFR to make it easier and more useful way of utilizing the languages across Europe. The CEFR stands for Common European Framework Reference, which is a framework that is being used recently, around the world in order to have specific evidence of learners' proficiency of a language. It precisely shows to what level of language learners belong. It is basically divided into six levels of foreign language proficiency; A1, A2, B1, B2, C1 and C2. Each level has its own references of language abilities. The way of making CEFR successful is by being aware of its usefulness, not only by teachers but by students too. Students and teachers should know their goal, and to achieve that they have to know their language level. Therefore, we want to focus on students' information about CEFR in Britannica LC around Kosovo. The study is conducted in a private school of languages "Britannica LC" in Gjilan. They were 12 groups of students, including different ages and background. The study covered two groups for each level of languages set by CEFR; 2-A1, 2-A2, 2-B1, 2-B2, 2-C1, 2-C2. The research results showed that students were informed about levels of English depending of the book they were using and on their age. We could also figure it out that teachers were familiar with CEFR.

Key words: CEFR; students; second language; European Council.

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1. Introduction

The Common European Framework Reference for Language abbreviated as CEFR is a structure or guidance of reference to provide a straightforward, coherent and comprehensive basis for the elaboration of language curriculum, the design of teaching and learning materials, and the assessment of foreign language proficiency. The Common European Framework Reference for Language (CEFR) provides the skills to break down language learning into six levels which it calls A1 to C2. The Common European Framework of Reference for Languages was designed by the Council of Europe as a way to standardize the levels of language exams in different regions. This strategy has been widely used not only in Europe but also internationally and as a result all exams are mapped to the CEFR strategies. Starting from A1 level which describes a very basic language level, as a learner you can move up the levels until you reach the Proficiency C2 level [1]. “By describing what you can do in reading, writing, speaking and listening the CEFR will tell you where you are on journey from beginner A1 through to Proficiency C2.”(Suriano, 2016, p.22) With people traveling, business, studying, working but having different backgrounds came the need of utilizing the language abilities. The purpose is mainly to help teachers know their students level of language and how they progress through the levels. On the other hand students’ information about CEFR helps them to know their goal and steps they should follow to get there. Considering all the mentioned things above, the purpose of the research is to find out specific information students of Britannica LC have about CEFR. CEFR examine six levels: A1, A2, B1, B2, C1, C2. These are described in the table below.

Table 1: The CEFR Levels (Taken from <https://www.linguacore.com/blog/prove-language-level-2-cefr/>)

Proficient User	C2	Can understand with ease virtually everything heard or read. Can summarise information from different spoken and written sources, reconstructing arguments and accounts in a coherent presentation. Can express him/herself spontaneously, very fluently and precisely, differentiating finer shades of meaning even in more complex situations.
	C1	Can understand a wide range of demanding, longer texts, and recognise implicit meaning. Can express him/herself fluently and spontaneously without much obvious searching for expressions. Can use language flexibly and effectively for social, academic and professional purposes. Can produce clear, well-structured, detailed text on complex subjects, showing controlled use of organisational patterns, connectors and cohesive devices.
Independent User	B2	Can understand the main ideas of complex text on both concrete and abstract topics, including technical discussions in his/her field of specialisation. Can interact with a degree of fluency and spontaneity that makes regular interaction with native speakers quite possible without strain for either party. Can produce clear, detailed text on a wide range of subjects and explain a viewpoint on a topical issue giving the advantages and disadvantages of various options.
	B1	Can understand the main points of clear standard input on familiar matters regularly encountered in work, school, leisure, etc. Can deal with most situations likely to arise whilst travelling in an area where the language is spoken. Can produce simple connected text on topics which are familiar or of personal interest. Can describe experiences and events, dreams, hopes and ambitions and briefly give reasons and explanations for opinions and plans.
Basic User	A2	Can understand sentences and frequently used expressions related to areas of most immediate relevance (e.g. very basic personal and family information, shopping, local geography, employment). Can communicate in simple and routine tasks requiring a simple and direct exchange of information on familiar and routine matters. Can describe in simple terms aspects of his/her background, immediate environment and matters in areas of immediate need.
	A1	Can understand and use familiar everyday expressions and very basic phrases aimed at the satisfaction of needs of a concrete type. Can introduce him/herself and others and can ask and answer questions about personal details such as where he/she lives, people he/she knows and things he/she has. Can interact in a simple way provided the other person talks slowly and clearly and is prepared to help.

1.1. Objectives of the study

The objectives of the study are:

- To figure it out if students have been tested for their level of English before starting the English course.
- To identify learners information on CEFR.
- To make recommendations for further research.

2. Literature review

CEFR as a standardized way of teaching and learning languages, it came with the need of communication around Europe [2]. Bérešová (2017) believes that one of the most important ways of adapting the CEFR is the production of language-specific Reference Level Descriptions. People coming from different places had to have something that assesses their knowledge of English (in our case) and other languages taught around Europe. However; knowing and using CEFR is beneficial for both, teachers and learners. Learners can even assess themselves according to the specifications that CEFR has with the four skills and with the knowledge that is required to each skills according to one of the six levels. According to [2] Bérešová (2017, p. 959) “The traditional four skills (listening, reading, speaking and writing) were replaced by communicative language activities, such as reception (aural and visual), production (oral and written), interaction (oral and written) and mediation, completed by strategies that are important for language processes and necessary for accomplishing the language performances.” So, CEFR focuses on the four skills and all of them take their part and are important for e learner.

3. Research methodology

The present study investigates students’ information and perceptions of CEFR levels. This research took place at the Language School – Britannica LC in Gjilan. The particular research techniques used in this study were student questionnaire and interview with the school principal that is and English teacher.

3.1. Research questions

The study will address the following research questions:

1. Do students know what CEFR is? If yes, how did they get to know about it?
2. Do students understand the value of being divided into levels according to their language knowledge?
3. Are students required to write essays and fill in forms according to their level?

3.2. Participants

There were twelve groups of students, two groups for each level set by CEFR and a total of 87 students, who were attending the English courses at Britannica LC. We also had an interview with the principal of the

Britannica LC, a hardworking English teacher and the founder of the school.

3.3. Instruments

For the purpose of this research, the study used students' questionnaire and principle's interview. The questionnaire had seventeen questions which were translated in Albanian with the purpose of understanding the questions better and in this way we could obtain more reliable research results. Also, there was an interview we had with the principal of Britannica LC. The reason for this interview was to give us the needed information on the school implementation of CEFR in Britannica LC, the way they implement it and so on.

4. Discussion

In this section of our paper, we will discuss the results we gathered using students' questionnaire and principal's interview. We made a questionnaire in order to have students' perspective on CEFR application, their competence of CEFR, their opinion in its application, their opinion whether they and their friends belong to the level they attend and many other questions related to our interest. Moreover, we wanted to have another perspective, principal's semi-structured interview helped us a lot in our research. We gathered useful and helpful information, showed and discussed below.

4.1. Students' questionnaire

Table 2: Results of students' questionnaire, question 1.

Students' level of English language	Student opinions about CEFR	Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree
A1	1. I know what CEFR (Common European Framework of Reference) is.				36%	64%
A2			6%	26%	42%	26%
B1			13%	25%	13%	50%
B2		3%	19%	26%	32%	20%
C1			15%	30%	46%	9%
C2			26%	16%	36%	22%

The first question of this questionnaire was; **I know what CEFR is**, and regarding groups that belonged to the first level **A1**, there was 0% of Strongly agree, Agree and Neutral whereas 36% of Disagree and 64% of Strongly disagree. The results regarding the groups that belonged to **A2** level show that 6% Agreed, 26% were Neutral, 42% Disagreed and 26% strongly disagreed, to continue with groups of **B1** level who 13% agreed, 25% were Neutral, 13% Disagreed and 50% strongly disagreed. Moreover, the results from the groups of **B2** level

demonstrate that 3% strongly agreed, 19% agreed 26% were neutral, 32% disagreed and 20% strongly disagreed. The next groups were **C1** level students from whom 15% agreed, 30% were neutral, 46% disagreed and 9% strongly disagreed to end up with students of **C2** level who 26% agreed, 16% were neutral, 36% disagreed and 22% strongly disagreed.

Table 3: Results of students' questionnaire, question 2.

Students' level of English language	Student opinions about CEFR	Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree
A1	2. I have been explained by my teacher how CEFR levels work.				27%	73%
A2				31%	51%	18%
B1			17%	17%	33%	33%
B2		3%	13%	21%	43%	20%
C1		84%		8%	8%	
C2			16%	26%	36%	22%

On the second question; **I have been explained by my teacher how CEFR levels work**, 27% of students of **A1** level Disagreed and 73% strongly disagreed. Regarding the **A2** level groups there were 31% who were neutral, 51% who disagreed and 18% strongly disagreed. Furthermore the results from **B1** students show that 17% agreed, 17% were neutral, 33% disagreed and 33% strongly disagreed. Continuing with the **B2** students who 3% strongly agreed, 13% agreed, 21% were neutral, 43% disagreed and 20% strongly disagreed. From **C1** level groups there were 84% who strongly agreed, 8% were neutral, and 8% disagreed, and at the end we have students from **C2** level where 16% agreed, 26% were neutral, 36% disagreed and 22% strongly disagreed.

Table 3: Results of students' questionnaire, question 3.

Students' level of English language	Student opinions about CEFR	Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree
A1	3. I have been informed for the importance of being divided into groups according to our knowledge of the language.	/	/	18%	45%	37%
A2		17%	40%	11%	26%	6%
B1		17%	45%	4%	17%	17%
B2		10%	58%	19%	13%	/
C1		16%	39%	/	/	/
C2		16%	57%	11%	16%	/

The results for the statement number 3; **I have been informed for the importance of being divided into groups according to our knowledge of the language**, regarding groups that belonged to **A1** level there were 18% who were neutral, 45% disagreed and 37% strongly disagreed. The results from **A2** level show that 17% strongly agreed, 40% agreed, 11% were neutral, 26% disagreed and 6% strongly disagreed. Additionally, results of students of **B1** level present that 17% of them were strongly agreed, 45% agreed, 4% were neutral, 17% disagreed and 17% strongly disagreed. The opinions of **B2** students were; 10% strongly agree, 58% agree, 19% Neutral and 13% disagree. Furthermore, 16% of the students from **C1** groups strongly agreed and 39% agreed, to end up with groups of **C2** level who 16% strongly agreed, 57% agreed, 11% were neutral and 16% disagreed.

Table 4: Results of students' questionnaire, question 4.

Students' level of English language	Student opinions about CEFR	Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree
A1	4. The role of CEFR is highly important in putting students in the level they belong.		8%	18%	37%	37%
A2		6%	14%	31%	31%	18%
B1		13%	45%	25%	13%	4%
B2		23%	42%	23%	12%	/
C1		16%	/	68%	8%	8%
C2		33%	36%	21%	5%	5%

On the forth statement; **the role of CEFR is highly important in putting students in the level they belong** 8% of **A1** level students agreed, 18% were neutral, 37% disagreed and 37% strongly disagreed. Students from **A2** level were determined on 6% strongly agree, 14% agree, 31% neutral, 31% disagree and 18% strongly disagree, to continue with the students of **B1** level who 13% strongly agreed, 45% agreed, 25% were neutral, 13% disagreed and 4% strongly disagreed. Next results are from students of **B2** level from whom 23% strongly agreed, 42% agreed, 23% were neutral and 12% disagreed. **C1** students' evidence show that 16% strongly agreed, 68% were neutral, 8% disagreed and 8% strongly disagreed. The last groups of **C2** level students revealed that 33% of them strongly agreed, 36% agreed, 21% were neutral, 5% disagreed and 5% strongly disagreed.

Table 5: Results of students' questionnaire, question 5.

Students' level of English language	Student opinions about CEFR	Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree
A1	5. I have been tested about my level of English before starting the course.	45%	27%	/	/	/
A2		57%	23%	/	/	/
B1		58%	38%	/	/	/
B2		39%	32%	/	26%	3%
C1		61%	39%	/	/	/
C2		57%	33%	5%	5%	/

The results of question 5(five); **I have been tested about my level of English before starting the course**, from students who belonged to **A1** level show that 45%strongly agreed and 27% agreed. Furthermore, the evidences from students who belonged to **A2** level show that 57% strongly agreed, and 23% agreed. Next results are from students of **B1** from whom 58% strongly agreed and 38% agreed to continue with the students of **B2** level who 39% strongly agreed, 32% agreed, 26% disagreed and 3% strongly agreed. The results presented from **C1** level students were; 61% strongly agree and 39% agree. The last groups of students are **C2** level who 57% strongly agreed, 33% agreed, 5% were neutral, and 5% disagreed.

Table 6: Results of students' questionnaire, question 6.

Students' level of English language	Student opinions about CEFR	Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree
A1	6. I think I belong to the level I'm in.	64%	36%	/	/	/
A2		57%	23%	/	/	/
B1		66%	21%	13%	/	/
B2		62%	35%	3%	/	/
C1		84%	16%	/	/	/
C2		63%	47%	/	/	/

On the 6th question; **I think I belong to the level I'm in**, 64% of students of **A1** level strongly agreed and 36% agreed. Regarding the **A2** level groups there were 63% who strongly agreed and 37% who agreed. Furthermore the results from **B1** students show that 66% strongly agreed, 21% agreed and 13% were neutral. Continuing with the **B2** students who 62% strongly agreed, 35% agreed, 3% were neutral. From **C1** level groups there were 84% who strongly agreed and 16% agreed. At the end we have students from **C2** level where 63% strongly agreed and 47% agreed.

Table 7: Results of students' questionnaire, question 7.

Students' level of English language	Student opinions about CEFR	Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree
A1	7. I and my classmates have approximately the same knowledge of English language.	/	45%	37%	18%	/
A2		18%	49%	7%	23%	3%
B1		13%	66%	13%	8%	/
B2		14%	42%	9%	29%	6%
C1		23%	69%	/	/	/
C2		15%	70%	15%	/	/

On the question '**I and my classmates have approximately the same knowledge of English Language**' students of **A1** level stated their opinions where 45% of them agreed, 37% were neutral and 18% disagreed.

Next groups of **A2** level students show that 18% strongly agreed, 49% agreed, 7% were neutral, 23% disagreed and 3% strongly disagreed. The results from **B1** level were; 13% strongly agreed, 66% agreed, 13% neutral and 8% disagreed. Moreover 14% of **B2** level students strongly agreed, 42% agreed, 9% were neutral, 29% disagreed and 6% strongly disagreed. . The next groups were **C1** level students from whom 23% strongly agreed and 69% agreed to end up with students of **C2** level who 15% strongly agreed and 70% agreed and 15% only agreed.

Table 8: Results of students' questionnaire, question 8.

Students' level of English language	Student opinions about CEFR	Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree
A1	8. I've been asked by my teacher to express myself clearly relating to a specific topic.	27%	57%	8%	8%	/
A2		37%	39%	18%	6%	/
B1		38%	41%	17%	4%	/
B2		19%	65%	16%	/	/
C1		84%	16%	/	/	8%
C2		48%	42%	10%	/	/

The results for the statement number 8; **I've been asked by my teacher to express myself clearly relating to a specific topic**, regarding groups that belonged to **A1** level there were 27% who agreed, 57% agreed, 8% who were neutral and 8% disagreed. The results from **A2** level show that 37% strongly agreed, 39% agreed, 18% were neutral and 6% disagreed. Additionally, results of students of **B1** level present that 38% of them were strongly agreed, 41% agreed, 17% were neutral and 4% disagreed. The opinions of **B2** students were; 19% strongly agree, 65% agree and 16% Neutral and. Furthermore, 84% of the students from **C1** groups strongly agreed and 16% agreed, to end up with groups of **C2** level who 48% strongly agreed, 42% agreed, 10% were neutral.

4.2. Principle's interview

One of the instruments that we used to conduct this research was the interview. We considered reasonable to make an interview with the principal of Britannica LC since she is an English teacher and the founder of the school we made the research on. Our intention was that through this interview, gather information about the implementation of CEFR in Britannica LC. The interview was a semi structured interview. Below we have full interview.

Interviewer: "How do you divide groups of learners in your school?"

At the beginning of each level, we divide the groups according to students' capacities and skills of English language. We don't divide them according to their age as many other courses do.

Interviewer: *“Do you test students before deciding to what group you divide them?”*

Interviewee: “We always test them when they first come to our school because we want to know their knowledge of English language and then put them in the group that best fits to their needs.”

Interviewer: *“What criteria do you use that precise to what level students belong?”*

Interviewee: *“All of our test, for pupils and adults are structured under CEFR requirements.*

Before starting our school, we have worked hard on the test in order everything to be related to CEFR because all of our students aim to continue their studies and most of them abroad and actually learning English is one of their aims so, today we have to promise and offer them the best so tomorrow we can have good and well educated generations.”

Interviewer: *“Do the textbooks you use take into consideration the implementation of CEFR?”*

Interviewee: “Yes, the textbooks that we use in our school are always textbooks that are written under CEFR recommendations; we change and usually tend to use the latest versions of textbooks each year.”

Interviewer: *“What students' skills do you test in order to move them to the other level when they finish the prior level?”*

Interviewee: “Generally we tend to test the four skills but we do that with the final test that students have to take and than an oral exam.”

Interviewer: *“Does your school implement all the criteria of CEFR seriously in your everyday work with students?”*

Interviewee: “Yes, we even stick the CEFR criteria in the walls of each classroom so students and teachers can see what it requires and will work more to achieve the requirements.”

5. Conclusion

The aim of this research was to find out information about the implementation of CEFR, information students have about it things that have been done in improving its implementation in the teaching process of Britannica LC, in Gjilan. In order to gather these information we used a couple of instruments, such as; students' questionnaire and an interview that we did with the principal of Britannica LC, who is an English teacher too. To conclude the investigation we conducted based on the instruments we used, we can say that students are informed about the importance of CEFR but they only know some basics. They are informed about the importance of being divided into levels, they agree that with their friends, they belong to the level they attend

but according to students' answers; we can realize that they weren't explained from their teachers about CEFR, its importance and requirements. We figured out that students undergo a written test in order to know their competences of English language and the level they belong. Throughout the level, students admit that they are required to express themselves about specific topics so they can put their language in use. On the other hand, with the interview we did with the principal of the school, we were explained in details the implementation of CEFR in Britannica LC. They have everything synchronized, textbooks, CD-s, tests, teaching methods and everything. We were explained that the full implementation of CEFR is intended to happen, teachers have useful and important information of CEFR requirements which enables them with the ability of guiding them in the right path to fulfill those requirements set by the Council of Europe. To summarize with our findings, we consider worth mentioning that students have information about the divisions of levels. Students weren't explained by their teachers in detail the role of CEFR, its importance but still, all the teaching process that they go through, aims to fulfill CEFR requirements because teachers know the criteria and know the goal they need to reach. They have in accordance to the CEFR criteria so, it is easier for them to reach their goals.

6. Recommendation

Based in the above mention results and way of conducting our research, we have some recommendation that probably would help in further research and would give other results that would help in the process of teaching and learning English language.

- Expand your research in other centers of English language.
- Increase the number of participant teachers.
- Use other instruments such as; writing reports, fill in forms, oral presentations, quizzes so you can test the application of CEFR in different skills.

References

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