



Common European Framework Implementation and English Language Learning Challenges

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Abstract

This paper is a short review regarding the challenges of implementing Common European Framework on EFL context outside of the Europe. It is mainly focused on the limitations of CEF, investigated the common reasons of the discrepancy between EFL and ESL learners' proficiency levels according to CEF, and finally presented the possible adopted version of Comprehensible Input by Stephen Krashen in EFL context as the probable solution to overcome some problems that EFL learners may encounter while learning a foreign language.

Keywords: EFL/ESL learners, Common European Framework, Krashen, comprehensible input

INTRODUCTION

Interest in a short-stay trip to a foreign country, or pursuing higher education abroad, and acquiring the ability to write, read and get access to scientific articles published in international journals, all reveal that English is widely used all over the world, particularly among the educated people. English for business, communication, learning, teaching, competing, researching, filming industries, compiling, and meaningful socio-economical-cultural-political exchanges, as well as many other reasons, makes it the Lingua Franca of the 20th and 21st centuries, the emperor of all spoken and living languages. Although there are languages with more speakers and natives, it is the English language which is currently the dominant language of the world. In this context, most countries in the world decided to use typical English language learning and teaching curriculum to be able to compete with many other countries. These countries, especially Middle-Eastern ones, attempted to use such curricula and implement pre-university programs to help the students to be prepared to follow the higher education courses in English, as the medium of the instruction. These programs are known under various names such as Foundation Programs in Gulf Cooperation Council, Intensive English Learning Program, etc. It is worth mentioning that while English is not the only course the students have to take, the focus is on their English learning abilities. In some countries like Iran, the medium of instruction is the Persian language except for English majors. In courses of English as a Foreign Language (EFL), the students can communicate in English in minimal situations and environments such as the college, university, or with their teachers.

The personal observations as a teacher with many years of experience show that the students are not interested in talking in English with their classmates. In continue, based on the theoretical and experiences of the investigator as well as the data collected from interviews with English teachers and learners, the study will shed light on the reasons for such disinclination to talk in English with classmates. Back to the EFL countries, in some universities, the language of instruction is the local language of their people. Still, other universities use English as the medium of instruction and implement placement tests, books, and final assessments, based on Common European Framework to measure the learners' abilities to progress and pass a level for the higher one. All to be considered, the question which is worth asking is whether such non-native EFL learners can compete with native-ESL learners academically. Here, the non-academic situations will be ignored since making a comparison between EFL and ESL learners is undoubtedly impossible in this area. Almost very similar curricula, books, measurements, and levels are prepared for EFL learners; thus, it is expected that they have similar proficiency or at least one level below the ESL speakers' proficiency but this question raises: is this the reality of EFL learning? Then, a general look is presented at the Common European Framework origin and analysis of some controversial parts of this learning framework.

THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

Common European Framework limitations and delimitations

The initial steps of development of a type of framework for Europe go back to almost over 40 years of dealing with language and linguistic projects by the Council of Europe (CoE), which led to the Common European Framework known as CEF. As a result, various levels of language learning appeared in a series of comprehensive specifications in the syllabus, including Threshold, Waystage, and Vantage levels (Van Ek, 1977; Van Ek & Trim, 1991; 1997). Almost all of these levels have standard features in the language learning process. They are communicative, action-based, and consider the learners at the center of the process. All other projects of Council of Europe have similar bases in the language learning process; for example, the needs analysis by Richterich and Chancerel (1980), and learner's autonomy and self-assessment by Oskarsson in the same year (Heyworth, 2006).

The above paragraph has mentioned that the advent of CEF refers to almost 40 years ago in Europe. Europe has lots of languages with roots in the Indo-European family. So, considering the language diversity (there are always socio-cultural diversifications, but it is out of this study's scope) in Europe, there should be a common language and similar level of language abilities among the citizens to make any type of communication. To achieve the goal, a long-term plan should be running to make the nations familiarized with some words and structures to communicate; in this context, this may be one of the fundamental theories of CEF.

There is a similar ground of developing language syllabi, guidelines for the curricula, examinations, course books, etc., which were prepared by the CEF all over the European countries. The purpose of such guidelines is to provide a comprehensive explanation of what the learners should do to communicate by language. They also describe the

development of essential knowledge and skills to act in such an effective way. This explanation covers the cultural context of the language, as well. These guidelines, or put it in a better word, the framework, describes various proficiency levels to measure learner's progress both in each level and in life-long objectives (Council of Europe, 2001).

Another goal of the Common European Framework was overcoming the problems of communication among the academicians who have been working on modern language in various educational systems all over Europe. It can also be considered as a tool for the administrators, course designers, teachers, teacher trainers, examination agencies and others, for reflection on their present academic status in teaching areas to ensure that they understand the needs of their learners (Council of Europe, 2001).

When there is a similar ground for setting and explaining the goals, methods, and contents, the framework facilitates the clarity of courses, qualifications, and syllabi. Therefore, it leads to the endorsement of global cooperation in the universal language area. The allocation of descriptors to elaborate on language proficiency can be helpful in a similar identification of the qualification in various contexts of the learning, which ends up in European mobility (Council of Europe, 2001).

One of the features of CEF, which makes it trendy and looks useful in Europe, is the geographical condition of this continent. Zarate and Alvarez (2004) conducted a study in Colombia, and some parts of their research have revealed another reason for the dominance of CEF in European countries. They argued that geographical factors have positive effects on the strength of CEF. These countries need communication in their borders with speakers of other languages; that is why they are plurilingual, and this is one of the unique features of CEF. But meanwhile, there is a vague situation here. Through CEF, do theoreticians believe in English as a dominant language of communication, or they consider mastery over their native languages? If the former is true, which seems logical, there is no need to count the plurilingualism of Europe, because they will talk more or less in one language only. However, if CEF is concerned with mastery over native languages, how sure they are that people along the borders can communicate easily. These are the problems that need more investigations and clarifications in CEF.

Why is CEF needed?

There are several reasons why the CEF is needed, but just some of them were selected and discussed as follows:

The effectiveness of international communication among members of various societies concerning cultural and identity diversifications, easy access to information, facilitation of personal interaction, improvements in job relations, and further mutual understanding.

The goals mentioned above can make the language learning process a life-long activity that can be developed through the educational system from the nursery school to higher education.

It is possible to design and develop a type of Common European Framework in the language learning process for all the levels to achieve the followings:

- The facilitation and cooperation of academic institutions globally.
- They are providing a similar platform to recognize all types of qualifications.
- And to help the learners, teachers, course designers, examination agencies, and administrators to correlate their attempts (Council of Europe, 2001).

According to CoE (2001), Common European Framework can cover the following areas:

- Language learning program including: the presupposition of the previous knowledge and their formulation with prior learning, especially among primary, secondary, high school, and higher education.
- Goals
- Contentment

These learning programs can be divided into four different types. The first is Global planning that helps the learners to acquire various aspects of language proficiency and communicative competence. The second type of learning plan is called Modular. It helps the learners to work and improve a special area for particular goals. The weighted learning plan is the third one, in which the focus is on the learning process that occurs in some special directions and initiates a type of profile to touch some particular areas in higher education that require special skills and knowledge. The last type of learning plan is partial planning. This calls the action to accept the responsibility for special skills and tasks (Council of Europe, 2001).

- The groundwork of language-related certification includes:
 - The content of the examinations
 - The criteria for the assessment based on positive achievements and not the un-fulfillments
- Self-directed planning includes:
 - The awareness increment of the learners based on his/her current knowledge level
 - Determining the goals which worth achieving, are feasible and most importantly are self-setting
- Material selections
- Self-assessment

Role of need analysis

Common European Framework can be implemented in higher proficiency levels of language and learning process with emphasis on the learners' needs that are subject to change. To this end, a more general type of qualification far from the threshold level is available, which is also in a similar alignment with the Common European Framework. Such qualifications should be clearly stated, and essential adjustments must be made based on national cultural domains (Council of Europe, 2001).

One of the most important problems of implementing the CEF or adapting any other similar framework in various EFL situations is the needs analysis. There are special and distinct social, educational, economic, and political boundaries in each country. These restrictions can be effective in selecting a new language as the second or a foreign one to

be taught in educational institutions. A huge number of studies have argued about the different learning styles of people or students; therefore, the first step is to measure and determine the type of learners in a country through need analysis procedures rather than blind adherence to a type of known framework. For example, students can be evaluated to determine to be auditory, visual, kinesthetic learners, or they can be measured on a more psychological basis such as the motivation of the learners, the learning strategies, or goals in their first language which are transferrable to the foreign language learning process. Their analytical abilities in the learning process can be measured, as well. Considering all these factors, a national EFL framework should be suggested or adopted from reliable and practical learning and teaching framework. Thus, the first essential step that also may need some time is the needs analysis before reviewing any book, designing any syllabus or curriculum, and before creating any teaching material.

The dominance of CEF and adaptation in language learning

Vogt (2012) sees the CEF as one of the major documents in the area of language policy. Such a document had a very remarkable impression over foreign language teaching and learning inside and outside of Europe; for instance, in Canada, Taiwan, and South America. It has been stated that this document, i.e. CEF, has relevancy with teachers, learners, and assessors. It is also obvious that among all the academic institutions, the CEF has been playing a vital role in foreign language policy. It can be argued that the other EU documents are not such impressive.

The CEF plays an important role all over the world, and nowadays, it is applicable in many foreign language programs in various countries. Since there is no access to all ministries of education, then it is somehow difficult to investigate the language learning curricula in different countries separately and make a comparison according to the CEF standards. But there should be some reasons for the dominance of such a curriculum all over the globe. The CEF has lots of advantages because it considers the learning process from A to Z. There are plenty of studies regarding the positive effects of CEF (Sulu & Kir, 2014; Beresova, 2017). Some countries, like Japan and Vietnam, implemented their specific language learning curricula and called it CEF-J, CEF-V because these curricula are derived from the CEF. So, the effects of the CEF cannot be denied. What makes the CEF as the essential element of curriculum adoption? It can be due to many reasons such as political, commercial, educational, and what can be called plurilingualism role of this document.

Needless to focus on all the reasons for the CEF dominance, education and plurilingualism aspects of the CEF are the focal points of the discussion. Zarate and Alvarez (2004) stated that since the Colombian Ministry of Education did not have a regular and strong proposal to be implemented in a foreign language learning context that can be adjustable with the learners' socio-cultural needs, using and adopting the Common European Framework or any other similar curriculum could be helpful. Although such plans like the CEF were organized and considered lots of factors in designing and implementing the information, it might not be applicable in any possible context.

The other noteworthy reason is the plurilingual and pluricultural characteristics of Europe. This continent includes various countries with different but maybe similar socio-

cultural factors. Surely, to design the Common European Framework, such diversities have been considered, and the professionals have done their best to cover these options in developing a curriculum. In the CEF (2001), it was stated that one of the goals is the protection and development of various languages and cultures in Europe. So, such a curriculum that considers learners with different backgrounds will affect the methods, materials, and strategies of learning and teaching.

Now, let's consider adjusting the CEF or similar programs based on language learning and teaching. CEF, as it was mentioned earlier and according to CoE (2001), is a plan for learning language and skills with level descriptors that show the proper level of learners in the language learning process. The vague side of this curriculum is that the plan is not clearly stated if it is designed for learning a native language or a foreign language. Considering one's native language, no one can state that s/he definitely has mastery over her/his language. There are grammatical, formal, and informal contexts in a language, and no one is proficient in all of these areas. In this sense, the first factor that comes to mind is questioning the function of the CEF in the native language or foreign language skills. In the case of native language, the descriptors like A1, A2, B1, B2, and similar divisions may be correct. For example, a Persian-language speaker who is in contact with other Persian speakers, course books, music, movies, etc. can be placed in one of the band descriptors according to Common European Framework (Appendix 1). But the problem is the applicability of the CEF descriptors and standards in EFL/ESL societies. Comparing a person who is learning English in London with a person who is living in a non-native environment, it can be said that the former has constant access to the learning situation while the learning situation for the latter is in special academic situations or rarely with tourists. So, CEF band descriptors like B1, B2 can be different on the basis of the abilities of candidates in ESL/EFL situations. Although learners of both situations can be considered B2, according to CEF, their language abilities are different.

Considering the CEF as a common framework of language learning in one hand, and the EFL national programs on the other hand show compatibility in some contexts, as well as some controversies in other ones (Ozer, 2012; Kondakci, 2014; Sak, 2013; Arslan, 2011; Shaarawy & Lotfy, 2013; Nakatani, 2012). The problem that needs further investigation is that the CEF is available and implemented in various European and non-European countries, but why are there discrepancies among EFL and ESL learner's capabilities in language learning?

The distance of EFL learners from CEF descriptors

IELTS and CEF challenge

Before reviewing some studies regarding the common problems of the EFL contexts all over the world, which may be the reasons of distance from the Common European Framework descriptors, the most important or better to say the challenging issue is the entrance of international examinations, particularly IELTS, to the world of language learning and teaching. Due to popularity in the EFL context, IELTS as an international examination, was mentioned in this study. IELTS and its objectives are known to all, and the observations and experiences show that the curricula in some countries are directed

to indirectly prepare students for the IELTS exam though they are really learning in terms of courses. In some places, students are randomly selected and assigned to take the IELTS exam to benchmark with the efficacy of teaching an English course in one academic year in a college or a university, and this raises the argument. IELTS is not concerned with communicative skills, nor even measures the students' real abilities in General English. It is an examination, mostly taken for academic or non-academic immigration. Many professionals cannot achieve a high score in IELTS. However, they are very knowledgeable academicians and have published different articles in the English language in many different fields of study and in high-index journals. Preparation for IELTS has nothing to do with intensive English learning courses in school or university. Jahangard (2007) and Hosseini (2007) emphasized that teachers in Iran teach in accordance with the nationwide exams that are so demanding. This is not true only for Iran. Almost due to the challenge of CEF and International Examinations, most EFL countries are directed to this stream, i.e., exam preparation rather than skill-based preparations. For example, academic writing in universities is totally different from the way students write in the IELTS exam. So, course designers and decision-makers should omit benchmarking of IELTS with EFL programs at colleges and universities. These are two different categories in Education. IELTS is a 6-month intensive course while foreign language learning is endless and the purpose should be communicative rather than getting a high score in IELTS. Such tests besides a national EFL curriculum should make the decision-makers and syllabus designers think about challenges EFL learners may encounter. Ability in EFL doesn't guarantee achieving a high score in IELTS and a high score in IELTS does not guarantee a learner's general and communicative knowledge and thus, officials and academicians must consider only one option and design their learning goals accordingly. There is an ambiguity here if CEF descriptors are in line with IELTS descriptors and if the IELTS score is the real representative of a person's performance according to CEF band descriptors. It seems that educationalists prefer to have learners who achieved high scores in international exams but through English intensive courses in colleges, universities, or maybe through foreign language institutions, which seems a bit injustice to education, context and the learners. The aforementioned reason is mainly related to decision-makers and curriculum designers in the area of education. They believe that the learners should have high communicative skills as well as high scores in international exams without any needs analysis measurements or even without taking into account any psycholinguistics parameters of their learning communities. Mere focus on exams is the main reason to find a gap between ESL/EFL exposures while both are following the CEF or similar learning and teaching plans.

Other challenging measurements

Viewpoint toward learning

Language learning and teaching attitude can be a key factor in mastering a new language. In all of the language learning classes, learners are having various considerations such as perceptions of their classes, teachers and the curriculum. These perceptions make their attitudes toward the process of language learning (Sengkey & Galag, 2018). Oxford (2001, cited in Akbari, 2015) believed that the language learning, to students, is a set of

grammatical structures and word lists that should be recited, rather than a type of integrated skills. Unfortunately, this is a prevalent issue, even nowadays. Not only students, but also teachers and parents consider language learning as mastery over grammar and vocabulary, so in its novice and amateur cases, the parents ask their children about the meaning of vocabulary, or they ask them the translation of a word in a foreign language as the means of ability measurement. This type of attitude, for sure, is a huge hindrance over communicative purposes of the learning procedures. The learners' performances can be under the control of their learning perceptions. More control over the learning process leads to achievements. Investigating the perceptions of the learners toward the language learning process will help the teachers and academicians to create and design new types of materials such as teaching methodologies, curricula, and learning outcomes (Al Hamami, 2019).

Teaching and teacher qualifications

Geographical isolation can be an active factor in the background of EFL students. Some students have attended classes in rural areas where they couldn't find knowledgeable and qualified teachers; however, other students have access to lots of classes and facilities. The problem is that the former students use the book as the only source of power, but the latter ones can progress in plenty of private classes or technological learning aids such as videotapes, CDs, etc. (Akbari, 2015). Putting an emphasis on the qualifications of teachers, it should be mentioned that sometimes teachers, native or non-native speakers of English, are assigned to teach in levels higher than their education and capabilities. They try to do their duties, but their educational background is not English. How a teacher with experience in English literature, translation, psychology, computer science, etc. can be expected to implement psycholinguistic factors in learning or employ different methodological techniques like direct method and desuggestopedia without enough information and knowledge? Some believe that the answer could be international certificates through which they can achieve this goal. However, firstly, the effectiveness of the procedures is not guaranteed, and still, the candidate's background should be considered as significant. Ayon (2012, cited in Shaaban, 2013) conducted a study in Lebanon on English teachers who were teaching in-state high schools. These teachers were the holders of a type of teaching certificate that is called Kafa'a. She believed that teachers were in the wrong side of their career because the certificate they had was characterized by "marginalizing the observation and practicum parts of the program as well as emphasizing the theoretical, traditional content of the course and the trainers' adoption of the same traditional teaching methods" (p. 117). Although that was the case of state high school teachers, it can be true for universities and colleges as well. Nabhani and Bahous (2010) investigated the typical professional development tasks and activities in private schools and concluded that such types of activities are not effective at all. The people who participated in such workshops believed that the tasks could not be applied in the classroom. The participants also complained that the presenter or supervisor of the program does not check the applicability of such theories in real situations. This is a real case. Having a professional certificate is sometimes a matter of business. These days, there are fully online certificates on the net. Can they be compared with their intensive

full-time class-based counterparts? Inside of the class, the supervisor introduces various materials, gets feedback from the trainees, classmates work together to write lesson plans, implement the best learning and teaching strategies, copy enough material, and prepare for their teaching practices. Regarding the online platform, almost 60% of such in-class activities will be deleted in an online module. Therefore, teachers' background, types of qualifications, and full-time or part-time form of such certifications play significant roles in learning and teaching a new language. For many reasons such as financial crisis, teacher's shortage, or other related justifications, the institutions might prefer to use a lower level of the available resources; as a result, again a discrepancy among EFL and ESL learners on the basis of knowledge and communicative competence will emerge.

Deeply thinking, the point is not to teach some grammatical structures or vocabulary. Thanks to tens of websites, books, and other available resources, it will be easy to be dominant over a book. The problem is that the people who design tests, evaluation rubrics, activities, exams, etc. do not have a background in testing, conducting research, item difficulty level, and they are also unfamiliar with theories and approaches in English Applied Linguistics.

The other problem which worth to be discussed here and it may be instrumental in ESL/EFL discrepancies in the employment of new and inexperienced teachers in colleges and universities. The management of the class is not a very easy and comfortable job for the new teacher (Colognesi, Nieuwenhoven & Beausaert, 2020). There must be a basic plan to locate the new teachers to practice their new knowledge and gain enough experience at schools or high schools under a type of mentorship program; then they can be assigned or transferred to colleges and universities accordingly. This type of employment can be seen in small countries where they focus on the employment of their citizens.

Effective group work

Crowdedness of classes and lack of enough and adequate practice suspend the communicative purpose of foreign language education. Such problems reduce the chance of students to participate in group discussions. Academically speaking, group work refers to a few numbers of students who are collaborating together to finish a task (Amatobi & Amatobi, 2013; Dooly, 2008; Akbari, 2015). Such a problem can be considered a challenging one if it occurs in an EFL environment where the only available source of communication is the teacher.

Motivation

Academic motivation, objectives, and, in the author's opinion, attitude toward learning a language especially English as a foreign language are not equal among all the learners. The observations by Akbari (2015) and the researcher of the study have found that to some of the learners, English courses and classes are obstacles for their qualifications and they ignore the communicative side of the learning. Somehow, for some other students, English classes are just a simple type of task or duty. For example, many students mentioned that although they are good at English, they would like to study their fields of

study in their local language; so, their attitude towards learning English is passing the course and getting a mark. Low levels of motivation lead to more absence in the class as well. Some students are not interested in 90-minute classes; however, such classes might provide practical activities and effective methods implemented for the learning purposes, and less motivated students will miss the class due to the absences.

Khaniya (1990 cited in Ghorbani, 2009), Subramanian (1985), and later on Akbari (2015) believed that some teachers prepare the students for the final examinations. The observations of the current researcher also confirm their finding. In such situations, students try to get a mark just to pass the level to the next one. There is no internal motivation for teachers and students as well. Some teachers use this strategy to show that their students passed the course successfully and also to pretend that the teacher's methods and techniques are the best. These factors make a huge gap between EFL and ESL learners who follow Common European band descriptors in common. Alderson and Wall (1993) stated that one of the reasons that the teacher is teaching English only for the purpose of testing is associated with fear, guilt, and embarrassment. Although up to the present time, it has not seen that the institutions blame teachers in public for the poor results, but it is undeniable that such academic fear has been part of the teachers' nature. Sometimes, the renewal of contracts for expats who teach abroad is dependent on this matter. Definitely, in such situations, people prefer to show good marks rather than practical and useful learning outcomes. The other related problem is a term which is called resit examination. Some universities or institutions give a second or sometimes a third chance to the students to take their exams again and again, with no logical justification. It might be a matter of pretending to be the holder of a useful and practical educational system or convincing the students as the shareholders of the system to run the education, which it is, in fact, a type of business in such places. Thus, the students might not feel responsible for learning and attendance in the class since they know that there will be second or more chances to take the exam. So, it can be a reasonable thing to take the exam many times, but the lack of learning responsibility will make ESL and EFL learners very different in knowledge and skills.

Educational textbooks

Akbari (2015) stated that the textbook has a significant role in every country's system of education. Working internationally as a researcher and teacher, it has been found that most of the books in educational institutions, state and nonprofit universities are published by famous publishing companies. These books are designed on the basis of a correlation between their level descriptors and the CEF. But this is not the whole issue. The problem is that these books are mostly designed for ESL learners to use what they have learned in a setting other than the class. They can use their knowledge communicatively. But the problem is implementing such books in an EFL situation. Students are placed at various levels based on non-standard local tests; they use books designed for ESL learners rather than EFL. In such circumstances, it is not very shocking if the level of students is entirely different in the two different contexts. There are scholars, researchers, and teachers who try to come to EFL countries after the retirement and write books emphasizing that these books are adjusted culturally and academically

to the level of the students. However, it is wrong, and they do not have access to any placement test results; they do no needs analysis as well. This case is mostly doing business rather than communicating language learning. This will keep EFL learners behind ESL learners with a high amount of exposure.

Evaluation and assessment

Working for a long period of time in many educational institutions, it can be mentioned that the concept of testing and evaluation is very vague in most of these places. What do they test? What is testing for them? What are they going to find? Either placement test at the beginning of the semester or any other type of test does not have a valid base. The questions are mostly copied from the Internet and pasted, or questions were wrongly and simply paraphrased. The other issue is that there is no needs analysis for the students to design the tests. Consider a grammatical structure like present continuous. A teacher is going to assess it at 3 different levels, including elementary, intermediate, and advanced. What is the base of designing questions, the CEF, the national testing system, or IELTS? And how can a teacher who has a background in other fields of study but is teaching English design a test adjusted with B1, B2, lower or higher? Here it is essential to have a background in testing and examination. These can make EFL learners' level very different from ESL learners. The standard procedure should be something like this: if a teacher has students at the elementary level and they are exposed to treatment for 15 weeks of English learning, the final exam must not be at the same level as the beginning of the semester. If they are studying at the B1 level, the final assessment must be in the B2 level. But is this the reality? What about nonprofit schools and private institutions all over the world? Definitely, they will design questions corresponding to the current level of students and not further. To some, the main problem is the decisions made by the higher officials; the students with lower levels are sent, based on their high school scores, to these universities, while the students with higher scores can study in top universities. It can be true, but in this case, the learning and teaching curriculum and also the expected goals and achievements cannot be designed according to the CEF or any other similar EFL learning and teaching plan; therefore, new plans must be designed and be implemented. In this context, the whole formula of assessment and evaluation is under question. Fraudulent institutions need to be identified and closed. Unacknowledged institutions should be supervised harshly, and their pass or fail procedures should be controlled strictly to achieve some real learning goals. It is also necessary to control the curriculum of accredited institutions to ensure their alignment with a functional plan in foreign or second language learning.

DISCUSSION

Previously, plenty of factors have been investigated, and some problems have been revealed, and up to the present that is 2020, there is no clear solution for such discrepancy neither among EFL/ESL learners who follow the same CEF nor EFL/ESL learners in different countries. Some EFL learners in a country might have higher abilities in comparison to their EFL counterparts in a different country. It is evident that changing or adjusting curricula, textbooks, teachers, and all other factors will be worth to be more

concerned regarding language learning and teaching, but there are some learning approaches that can be successful in achieving more if they implement successfully. Some examples are the Natural Approach, Monitor Hypothesis, Output Hypothesis, and many similar hypotheses. But, personally, it can be mentioned that Stephen Krashen's Comprehensible Input has been applied to my EFL classes, and it has been found the results are promising to some extent. Implementing this hypothesis, some factors should be under control, which will be discussed more in the following.

The current researcher would like to discuss the history of this approach and simultaneously analyze it critically. Krashen and Terrel (1983) stated that this hypothesis argues the acquisition of language through some input that is a little bit higher than the level of competence. Well, the first thing that comes to mind and is also useful for EFL scholars who criticize or ignore the role of higher input in EFL classes is that originally, this hypothesis was made in an ESL context where learners had access to real language exposure somewhere outside of the class. In this situation, the language will not be learned but acquired; this was the first idea of Professor Krashen. He also stated that listening and reading are the primary skills of language acquisition. He suggested $i+1$ in which "i" is the current level of learners while "1" is the higher input. Harati (2000) stated that incomprehensible input, grammatical errors are not considered seriously to allow the increment of the fluency, and in case of the impact of intelligibility, feedback can be provided. Accordingly, Krashen worried about attention to the accuracy because, in this case, students will be self-conscious, and this consciousness will stop the progressive chain of learning the second or foreign language.

Bringing comprehensible input inside the EFL classes not only help the teachers to improve their current level of language, especially those who started their job recently, but also helps the students to be in more complicated situations inside the class to perform better somewhere at the end of the semester or outside of the class. Back to work on an issue mentioned earlier regarding the assessment, unfortunately, it has been observed that some students are studying English at an intermediate level and in the final exam, they should answer the questions with the same level of difficulty. How can such an exam determine the students' progress? Some believe that higher-level questions can result in the learners' failure in the exam. So, comprehensible input can be considered as one of the functional solutions for such problems.

Krashen's idea can be applied to all skills and subskills of the EFL context, although the original version of this idea is focused on two skills only. As a suggestion, it can be considered in two different ways. Classes with students of real or close to actual levels of CEF band scores, allow the teacher to provide the students with more qualitative and quantitative materials. For instance, consider a listening class where there are ingenious EFL learners with their real ability of pre-intermediate level. So, the teacher decided to provide them with higher-level materials of learning, and surprisingly, he was very successful, and they performed well in their formal and informal assessments. Thus, the real ability and levels of students should be considered well in EFL contexts. In speaking, students can be exposed to some authentic materials like podcasts, vocal books, and news for pleasure, as a higher source of input.

There are students at each level, who can be called fake or false learners. They are studying at wrong levels due to many issues such as lack of proper placement test, or due to the existence of places in which education equals business and thus, what is important is passing a level to a higher one even if it is the false progress. In both situations, the comprehensible input is possible. Consider an example of grammar. Grammatical exercises are mostly in the form of fill in the blanks in most workbooks. Due to lower learners' proficiency levels, comprehensible input cannot be implemented correctly, but the students can be exposed to more laborious forms of the same grammatical structure. Back to the grammatical point, students can be exposed not only to fill in the blank questions, but they may be bombarded with a bunch of various exercises such as multiple-choice, changing the verb, correcting the mistake, jumbled sentences, and any other similar activities. Regarding reading, the students can be asked to answer True/False questions, find the main idea of the text, topic sentence, synonyms, antonyms, and so on. It can be guaranteed that exposing the students in classes with harder activities of the same level will prepare them for the level progress measurement at the end of the educational semester; therefore, more can be achieved according to the CEF.

Sims (1996) mentioned that $i+1$ is not quantifiable or definable but the comprehensible input theory is remaining as the useful theory of EFL teachers. Learners can learn the second or foreign language through materials that are a bit beyond their current level of proficiency.

Materials that are below or at the same level of students can be an impeding factor for their progress, while those very far above their level will destroy the encouragement and motivation.

Spada and Lightbown (2006) stated that researches on classroom-based learning had emphasized the effectiveness of comprehensible input in the learning. Still, there are some points where students cannot make progress and thus, guiding instruction is needed. As it was mentioned earlier, although the students are exposed to the higher and harder materials, all of them are directed under the supervision of the teacher. The teacher distinguishes the level of the difficulty of the materials or is the decision-maker of the suitability of extra and harder activities in the class. So, it can be mentioned that this type of comprehensible input implementation in the EFL context is also controlled and guided, which is different from the origin of this theory in the ESL context. Obviously, implementing approach in a very far and different situation needs changes and adaptations according to institutional, economic and socio-cultural factors; therefore, comprehensible input is not exempt as well. It requires changes and modifications to be used in EFL contexts.

CONCLUSION

The paper tried to investigate the challenges that make a big difference in the knowledge and performance of different English language learners either in an ESL context or EFL one. It has been observed that in two EFL contexts where English is a foreign language, learners of two different countries have shown different proficiency results. Some of the problems of such discrepancy were investigated in this paper as a short review and it was

attempted to be a little critical of the paper's nature. It can be suggested that some Socio-cultural-Psycholinguistics-linguistics and economic analyses are in need to be measured in various countries where English is a foreign language and a comparison would be a point of another research to investigate what are the exact problems of knowledge discrepancies among EFL learners of various countries.

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APPENDIX

Common European Framework of Reference for Languages: learning, teaching, assessment

Table 1. *Common Reference Levels: global scale*

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.