

# Implementation and impact of the CEFR in Costa Rica's foreign language education system

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*This article explores the implementation of the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR; Council of Europe [CoE] 2001) and its impact on Costa Rica's syllabus reform of the foreign language education system. Since its official adoption by MEP (Ministry of Public Education of Costa Rica) in 2016, the CEFR has guided curriculum reforms, shifting from traditional content-based teaching—focused on grammar and vocabulary—to a student-centered, communicative approach. Findings highlight improvements in students' proficiency levels and teacher professional training, though challenges remain, such as unequal resource distribution and lesson-time constraints. The article underscores the need for systematic teacher training, ongoing policy adjustments, and implementation in higher education. Recommendations include increasing lesson time and data-driven resource allocation to enhance language education reach, particularly in underserved regions.*

**Keywords:** CEFR, Costa Rica, English language learning, bilingual education, language testing

## 1 Introduction

Before 2016, language education in Costa Rica—particularly in English—was shaped mostly by traditional pedagogies. Despite national coverage, Costa Rica lacked a unified framework to assess language proficiency systematically. As a result, significant disparities developed in instructional quality and assessment criteria across educational regions.

To address these challenges, the Ministry of Public Education (MEP) adopted the descriptors and guidelines included in the 2001 edition of CEFR in 2016. The use of its comprehensive, internationally recognized scale to describe language proficiency from A1 (beginner) to C2 (mastery) (CoE 2001) aimed to modernize Costa Rica's language education system by aligning curricula, assessment, and instructional practices with global needs. This alignment required teachers to adapt classes and create or modify class materials to achieve the specific communicative outcomes of each proficiency level. Instruction had to reflect the increasing complexity of linguistic content and real-world tasks expected at each stage. Teachers were encouraged to move beyond traditional grammar-based instruction and integrate performance-based activities that foster authentic language use. This shift demanded ongoing reflection, adaptation, and professional development to ensure consistency between teaching, assessment, and the CEFR descriptors.

The implementation of the CEFR in Costa Rica has unfolded through a gradual and structured process that reflects the country's long-term commitment to sustainable educational reform. Beginning with the institutional integration of CEFR principles between 2016 and 2018, efforts focused on engaging key stakeholders, designing CEFR-based lesson plans, and promoting communicative, task-oriented assessment practices. During the following phase (2019-2020), focus shifted to consolidating these reforms through quality assurance, supervision of use, and teacher development initiatives. Since 2021, the process has entered a third stage, one of refinement and full implementation, characterized by the widespread adoption of CEFR-aligned practices across all educational levels and the integration of proficiency-based assessment and certification systems.

This article traces the process of CEFR implementation in Costa Rica and analyses its impact on curriculum design, pedagogy, teacher training and assessment. Drawing on institutional documentation, national test results and recent evaluations, the authors critically examine both the successes and ongoing challenges of this reform process. They conclude by offering policy recommendations and future directions.

## 2 Pre-CEFR language education practices

Costa Rica's engagement with English language education dates to 1825, when the Grammar-Translation Method dominated instruction, reinforcing the notion of language as written content to be memorized and recited (Córdoba-Cubillo et al. 2005). Toward the end of that century, some schools began to adopt the Direct Method, which encouraged oral interaction and more naturalistic learning (Rojas-Díaz 2021). However, because many instructors were foreign teachers or English-speaking Costa Ricans who lacked a pedagogical background, its implementation was uneven and often ineffective. In the 20th century, efforts to professionalize English teaching gradually advanced, particularly with the establishment of teacher-training programmes at the University of Costa Rica (UCR) in the 1950s (Marín-Arroyo 2013). Although this milestone marked a significant step forward, the Audiolingual Method promoted at the time still fell short of developing the communicative competence later emphasized by international frameworks. By the 1990s, Costa Rica began to experiment with Communicative Language Teaching; however, institutional inertia, unequal resource distribution (Córdoba-Cubillo et al. 2005), and washback to traditional national evaluations limited its widespread adoption.

Assessment practices mirrored the instructional emphasis on form over function. The former national assessment tool that MEP would design to determine students' proficiency, called *Bachillerato Exam*, focused on reading comprehension but lacked guiding proficiency scales or communicative benchmarks (Marín-Arroyo 2013). Because teachers focused on preparing their students for the test, other formative activities were neglected: students were not provided with much listening or speaking practice in class, memorization of vocabulary and grammatical structures was encouraged, and English classes were given in Spanish to "ease" students' learning process.

Efforts to depart from these text-based practices started to take place in the early 2000s. Early initiatives of the Office of Foreign Languages centered on improving listening and speaking abilities (MEP 2021a). However, the lack of a national language framework—such as the CEFR—meant that teaching goals, classroom and assessment practices, and student proficiency expectations varied significantly across schools and regions.

A 2015 diagnostic report revealed that teachers found the English syllabus difficult to interpret and implement, overly subjective, and lacking alignment with the CEFR (MEP 2015). Its content was considered outdated, of limited relevance to learners, and mostly ineffective as it did not adequately address the communicative competencies required in contemporary contexts. More importantly, proficiency outcomes remained below expectations despite twelve years of instruction largely due to the absence of clear exit benchmarks and misalignment between curriculum, assessment, and classroom practices.

In sum, the pre-CEFR era showed a system that was fragmented and in need of alignment, paving the way for the CEFR's adoption as a unifying framework.

### 3 Adoption and familiarization with CEFR (2016–2018)

#### 3.1 Educational system

In 2016, MEP spearheaded a national curriculum overhaul that resulted in the official adoption of the CEFR as the guiding benchmark framework for its foreign language education programmes. Although no further updates have been made to the English programmes since then, meaning that the CEFR *Companion Volume* (CEFR/CV; CoE 2020) has not yet been incorporated into national policy or official curricular frameworks, the use of CEFR as the guide to setting exit proficiency levels brought about many learning opportunities and changes.

The new 2017 English syllabus provided the rationale for the adoption of CEFR's 'Can Do' descriptors as the programmes' learning objectives. According to MEP, the CEFR was the right choice as it "provides a common basis for the development of language syllabi, curriculum guidelines, textbooks, and assessment, describes what language learners do at different levels of proficiency within domains and scenarios, using self-affirmative language, [and] provides a common terminology that can be adapted for all languages and educational contexts" (MEP 2017: 27). MEP now aimed to emphasize the social nature of communication, and CEFR descriptors were to guide such a transformation.

The traditional text-based, teacher-centered system had to change toward a student-centered, task-based learning one that mirrored CEFR's competence work more closely. The previously emphasized Communicative Approach progressively shifted to the now-favored Action-oriented Approach (AoA). Official MEP documents detailed the new roles of teachers and learners, provided examples of teaching learning strategies, as well as sample mediating strategies and activities, and all within the framework of CEFR.

The implementation of the new curriculum was to be made progressively. The long-term goal was that, by starting in 2017 with seventh graders, results could be seen by 2021. Figure 1 shows the assignment of CEFR bands to each level in primary and secondary education in Costa Rica (MEP 2016a). The high school system would graduate students operating at an exit level of B1.2 (ready for B2 proficiency instruction). As can be observed in Table 1, 'new' bands were created (A1.1 and A1.2, for example) and assigned to each grade. It should be noted that grades 7-9 receive three weekly lessons of 40 minutes each, while grades 10 and 11 receive 5 weekly lessons of 40 minutes each. CEFR proficiency levels were redistributed to meet the greatest number of band descriptors across grades based on the number of instructional hours assigned. In bilingual high schools, for example, English instruction in grades 10 and 11 has on average five weekly lessons of 40 minutes for 41 weeks, a total of 136 hours. As Table 1 shows, each level has its own CEFR benchmarks, which have also been distributed accordingly.

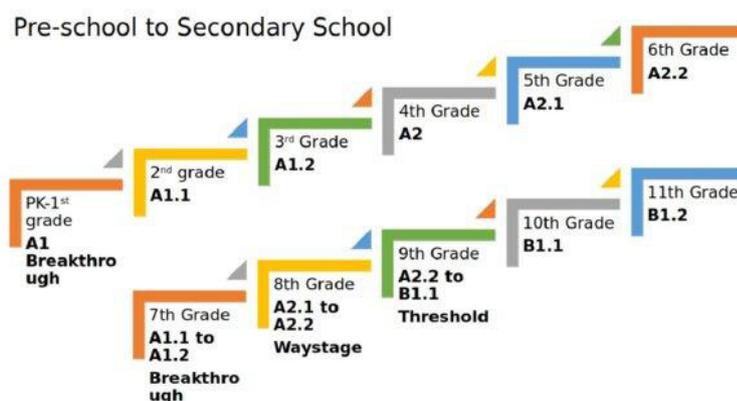


Figure 1. Distribution of CEFR proficiency bands as exit profiles across grades in primary and secondary education in Costa Rica

**Table 1.** Proposed plan of distribution of CEFR Benchmarks according to the number of instructional hours of English and expected proficiency level to achieve in regular public high schools

Grade level	Yearly Teaching Hours	CEFR Guidelines / Benchmarks	Exiting proficiency level
7	82	A1 90-100	A1-A2.1
8	82	A2 180-200	A2.2
9	82		B1.1
10	136	B1 350-400	B1.1
11	136		B1.2

Source: National English advisor, M. Granados, personal communication, 27 October 2025.

### 3.2 Teachers' professional profile

Adoption and familiarization efforts with the CEFR also required teachers to further professionalize their language proficiency, pedagogy and assessment practices. Therefore, early in the process, the MEP launched a series of nationwide workshops, conferences and seminars to help improve teacher competencies.

Some teachers welcomed the initiatives as intellectually stimulating and professionally enriching. Others, however, voiced concerns about unrealistic expectations—particularly the demand to deliver CEFR-based outcomes in contexts where infrastructure, resources and digital access remain limited. Such concerns were also founded on the new societal expectations on teachers' professional identity: with the new syllabus their role is considered pivotal in achieving national bilingualism goals, and they are thus held accountable through standardized testing of students (e.g., the PDL-MEP).

In addition, teachers were now required to have a B2-C1 English level and a sound understanding of the theoretical foundations of the new English programmes (Programa Estado de la Nación 2017). To address these needs, the results obtained from the CEFR-aligned proficiency tests given to teachers in 2015 were used "to design and implement training courses to improve [their] communicative language ability and teaching practices" (MEP 2017: 9). For example, the programme *¡Actualizándonos!* is a continuous professional development initiative born in 2016 that encompasses training in both linguistic proficiency and pedagogical mediation (MEP 2016b).

CEFR-focused training opportunities were also provided. The first training workshops helped teachers learn about the CEFR, understand its objectives, and comprehend that its adoption would transform their English teaching practice from structural grammar-based instruction to meaningful, communicative, and task-based learning that was more in accordance with current global needs and profiles. The second wave of training initiatives helped teachers explore how AoA and CEFR could be incorporated into their lesson plans, classroom activities and assessments to effectively sequence lessons across a continuum of proficiency. Therefore, national workshops as well as certification and in-service training programmes further familiarized educators with key concepts such as 'Can Do' statements, learning progression scales, and the AoA principles, as outlined in the CEFR/CV (CoE 2020). Finally, a third type of training aimed to teach instructors how to use CEFR-aligned assessment elements such as integrated skill tasks, contextualized rubrics, and performance-based judgments, which reinforced the CEFR's holistic vision of language use. Assessment practices evolved toward criterion-referenced, transparent and descriptive scales that promote coherence between classroom activities and evaluation practices through the use of performance indicators that were specifically distributed and even expanded for the Costa Rican context.

Governmental authorities shared support materials that would help teachers plan their lessons with the new AoA and CEFR-based learning outcomes in mind. For example, the *Resource Kit for Seventh Grade LEBS and Bilingual Groups* provided teachers with additional ideas and resources to strengthen

and practice students' oral and written production. "The intention of this kit is to make the syllabus *can-dos* accessible through a set of tasks for each competence" (MEP 2018a: 4). Thus, this material blended AoA principles and CEFR band descriptors and poured this understanding into lesson plan templates, sample lesson plans, and classwork activities.

### 3.3 Assessment practices

The introduction of new national standards and CEFR-aligned learning outcomes also guided assessment practices across public schools (Alianza para el Bilingüismo 2018). Official documents highlighted the need for objective oral assessments grounded in CEFR descriptors (MEP 2018c). Likewise, initiatives such as the INCO programme—conversational English workshops for secondary students—were guided by methodological documents that aligned learning indicators with CEFR levels for curriculum and assessment design (MEP 2018).

The adoption of the CEFR encouraged the construction of assessment processes that incorporate, as Bachman (2009) notes, deep expertise across linguistics, pedagogy, and psychometrics. Such assessments should also prove effective through the collection of validity evidence (Bachman and Palmer 1996).

Consequently, a revamp of the assessment processes under this light became a priority towards the collection of "empirically based information to both close learning gaps and generate evidence of learning successes" (MEP 2017: 10).

### 3.4 Prueba de Dominio Lingüístico (PDL-MEP)

One key development in response to the new approach was the English Diagnostic Test (PDL-MEP), Costa Rica's large-scale English proficiency test. This test measures students' communicative abilities and evaluates the effectiveness of the educational system in achieving CEFR-based goals, ensuring institutional accountability for language outcomes. Its design aligned internationally recognized descriptors with national curriculum goals and local delivery conditions (Quesada-Pacheco and Araya-Garita in press; Dimova et al. 2020) by adapting to technological inequalities across regions (Quesada-Pacheco and Araya-Garita in press), engaging stakeholders (Quesada-Pacheco et al. 2023), and addressing the limitations inherited from the discontinued Bachillerato Exam.

The implementation of the PDL-MEP results from a systematic, multi-stakeholder engagement process between the UCR programme PELEx (Programa de Evaluación en Lengua Extranjera) and the MEP. The active participation of specific actors—national and regional advisors, school directors, IT staff and pedagogical coordinators—ensures clarity, transparency and effective communication. Engagement begins with inter-institutional planning meetings and continues through the joint design of sampling frameworks, material distribution, mock testing and technical training. This sustained collaboration culminates in the delivery of official testing, reporting and certification, exemplifying an inclusive, coordinated and accountability-driven approach to large-scale language assessment.

The implementation of the PDL-MEP not only enabled the comparability and standardization of data but also positioned CEFR-aligned testing as a pivotal mechanism for driving systemic educational improvements through evidence-based decision-making. Decisions about school quality, equity and curricular reform must be data-informed and pay rigorous attention to fairness, validity and transparency (AERA et al. 2014; ILTA 2024), which resonates with McNamara's (2000) view of language assessment as an activity that entails ethical and social consequences.

In response, the PDL-MEP adopts O'Sullivan's (2021) Comprehensive Learning System, which promotes the integration of curriculum, instruction and assessment. In this model, CEFR descriptors serve not merely as scoring references but as the foundation for teaching objectives, classroom practices and feedback processes, including new materials, assessment tools, training workshops and CEFR literacy

initiatives. The PDL-MEP applies this approach by delivering results linked to CEFR bands, offering diagnostic feedback and promoting curricular alignment.

#### 4 Consolidation and evaluation of CEFR use (2019-2020)

Foreign language instruction based on the CEFR standard scale for proficiency has encouraged teachers to create student-centered environments that foster autonomy and active learning (Quesada-Pacheco and Araya-Garita in press). Clearer learning goals that allow monitoring of student progress and tailor instruction to individual needs, if necessary, now guide lesson planning. Classroom activities encourage more realistic use of language in the classroom through authentic tasks. As a result, learner autonomy and engagement have become paramount, in alignment with CEFR's learner-centered philosophy.

Assessment practices have also evolved in accordance with CEFR standards. The use of meaningful, contextualized language tasks that integrate all skills, address communicative competences and employ performance-based rubrics has resulted in more useful measures of student proficiency in the personal and academic domains. This composite of features results in assessment tools with enhanced construct validity that can guide instructional decisions and support learning (Quesada-Pacheco et al. 2023).

Empirical evidence confirms the positive impact of CEFR implementation on English language learning in Costa Rica. Figure 2 compares the percentage distribution of English listening proficiency levels (CEFR bands) among Costa Rican secondary school students as assessed by two tests. The 2008 test only assessed listening; it was created entirely by MEP, and according to it (MEP 2021a), it followed the CEFR's framework of language assessment. The 2019 test was the PDL-MEP, which was created by the UCR and was aligned to the CEFR. As observed, in 2008 students in the A1 band (64.7%) were predominant, meaning most students were basic language users with limited communicative ability; whereas a much smaller number reached A2 (18.7%), B1 (8.0%), B2 (5.5%), and C1 (2.3%). In contrast, the 2019 results reveal a clear upward shift in proficiency compared to those from 2008, with more students reaching A2 and B1 levels, although the majority remained below the independent user threshold (B2).

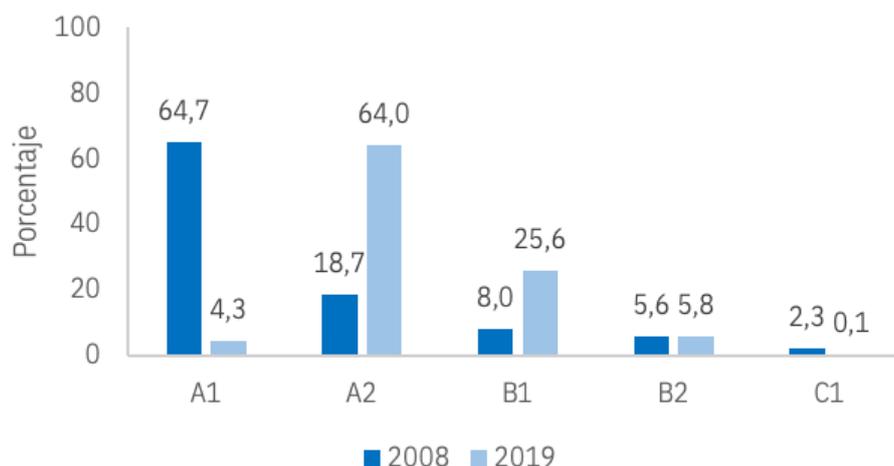


Figure 2. Percentage distributions of the results obtained by high school students in the English Proficiency Tests of listening, 2008 vs. 2019. Reprinted from the *Educational Policy for Language Promotion* (MEP 2021a)

The contrast between the 2019 and 2021 general performance results also confirms progress. As Figure 3 shows, in 2021 although the largest group of students was still in the A2 band, there were more students who moved to more proficient bands—B2 and C1—showing an improvement from the 2019 results. The number of students in A2 dropped sharply to 57%. There was also a notable increase in B2

(12%) and a slight rise in C1 (2%). Data from the national proficiency test administered in 2019 and again in 2021, after the adoption of CEFR, reveals significant improvements in student performance. Based on official information obtained from MEP's 2008 listening test, the proportion of students attaining A2 and B1 proficiency has increased notably since then, indicating that systemic reforms grounded in CEFR principles are yielding measurable progress.

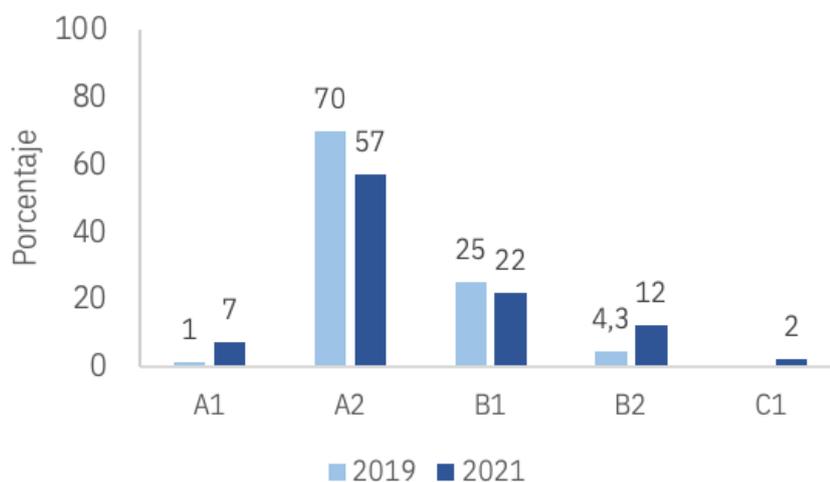


Figure 3. Percentage distributions of the results obtained by high school students in the English Proficiency Tests for four skills, 2019 vs 2021.<sup>1</sup> Reprinted with permission Quesada-Pacheco et al. (2023)

## 5 Refinement and full implementation (2021-present)

The adoption of the CEFR has acted as a catalyst for a profound transformation of English language education in the national public system. Classroom practices shifted toward a more communicative, learner-centered model rooted in authentic language use (Quesada-Pacheco et al. 2023) that is constantly and consistently improving. The creation of bilingual classrooms<sup>2</sup> and the full adoption of CEFR-aligned curricula have accelerated reform. Regional workshops such as *English on the Spot* (MEP 2024) and *English for Conversation* (MEP 2018b) now provide secondary students with additional practice to improve their oral skills.

Furthermore, English lesson coverage in preschool and primary education has been increased (MIDEPLAN 2018). Now, the entire country's foreign language education system in English is aligned to CEFR.

Teacher professional development has become a strategic priority, with tenure now contingent on achieving advanced proficiency (C1) and with sustained training opportunities supported by inter-institutional alliances. National advisory committees have devoted much of their efforts toward the creation of additional resources that refer to the CEFR/CV to support teachers' classroom practices (MEP 2023) and language assessment (MEP 2021b).

The definition of exit profiles for secondary education—B2 for bilingual and technical schools, B1 for other modalities—has further standardized learning outcomes and learning achievement. Systematic, CEFR-based assessment mechanisms now inform policy decisions, ensuring that diagnostic data directly shape targeted training and curriculum design, in accordance with McNamara (2000).

1. These findings are based on students who finished high school under the previous English programme, in operation until 2019, before the first graduating class of the new English programme, implemented in 2017, finished in 2021.
2. Bilingual classrooms are in high schools that provide 14 English lessons per week: 5 listening/speaking, 5 reading/writing, and 4 literature. There are eight such schools in the country.

Institutional cooperation, notably between MEP and PELEx, has strengthened assessment systems and addressed logistical and pedagogical challenges. Such collaboration resulted in a tool that effectively aligned curriculum, teaching, learning and assessment. Although the PDL's administration was not nationwide in the last two years, the current national English proficiency test (created and administered since 2024 by MEP) also responds to the new CEFR-based approach (MEP 2017).

## **6 Policy evolution and future directions**

Costa Rica's implementation of the CEFR remains an evolving interpretive process. As positive results have begun to appear, attention is shifting toward consolidating the policy strategies they stem from and replicating them. The next phase of the reform emphasizes more effective responsiveness to classroom realities, data trends, and long-term national goals for bilingualism and educational equity.

One key future direction involves systematic curriculum revisions informed by both teacher feedback and student learning data. The insights gained by practitioners will play a critical role in ensuring that curriculum materials are pedagogically sound, contextually relevant and technologically appropriate. In fact, the MEP is now innovating with online placement tests, interactive self-assessment tools and task-based learning activities mapped to CEFR levels to enhance CEFR-aligned teaching and assessment (Araya-Garita and González-Ramírez 2024).

The vast amount of data that can be obtained through these digital means should continue to be used to strengthen curriculum implementation and classroom practice by welcoming CEFR experts' advice, holding training workshops by academia, and providing close advisory sessions. Integrating classroom-based evidence with national performance data allows policymakers to better align instructional content with realistic proficiency outcomes (Araya-Garita and González-Ramírez 2024).

Costa Rica's long-term bilingualism goals have driven the adaptation of the CEFR across educational levels, with ongoing efforts to extend CEFR-based instruction into higher education and vocational training to ensure continuity in language development. Concurrently, policies to enhance teacher qualifications, redistribute resources, and address local instructional needs reflect a commitment to data-driven policymaking aimed at raising standards and promoting equitable progress among all learners.

## **7 Challenges and limitations**

While teacher training represents one of the most notable achievements of implementing a CEFR-based curriculum, the underlying professional development model has its limitations. Teachers in rural areas, non-traditional learning centres and underfunded schools often lack access to ongoing, context-sensitive professional development and may be ill-equipped to fully adopt communicative methodologies or interpret CEFR-aligned assessment results (Araya-Garita 2021). Many of these educators reported difficulty in translating CEFR theory into classroom practice as they believe they lack mentorship, enough reflection time, or clear curricular adaptation guidelines and models. Teachers have also highlighted the disconnect between the programme's theoretical demands and the realities of their instructional settings (Programa Estado de la Nación 2023).

Many public schools still face challenges such as large class sizes, limited instructional time, and wide proficiency differences among students, hindering teachers' capacity to assess language proficiency effectively. As a result, assessment often remains focused on the four skills rather than the four modes of language use outlined by the CEFR. This results in a continued overemphasis on grammar, vocabulary, and reading comprehension, while speaking, listening, and writing are often neglected (Quesada-Pacheco et al. 2023; Fallas-Godínez and Araya-Garita 2024). According to Araya-Garita and González-Ramírez (2024), the unequal allocation of instructional time across different school types stands as one of the most pressing concerns.

These disparities are further compounded by rising expectations linked to national bilingualism goals and high-stakes assessments such as the PDL-MEP test, placing additional stress on educators, many of whom are required to meet CEFR-based outcomes in conditions far from ideal (Elizondo-González and Araya-Garita 2026).

Structural challenges also hinder equitable implementation of CEFR-based instruction. Limited instructional time, especially at the primary level, reduces the opportunity for students to build strong linguistic foundations early on. Persistent differences in access to quality instruction between urban and rural areas, as well as in boys' and girls' speaking performance, threaten to widen achievement gaps.

Female students consistently underperformed in oral interaction tasks, which suggests gendered patterns of engagement or confidence in communicative settings within the classroom. Similarly, students in rural and marginalized areas lag behind those in urban centres, largely due to unequal access to qualified teachers, digital tools, and adequate resources. These inequities raise critical concerns regarding the consequential validity of the CEFR-aligned reform (Messick 1995).

## 8 Conclusions and recommendations

The adoption of the CEFR has significantly transformed Costa Rica's national language education system, aligning it more closely with international standards and best practices (Quesada-Pacheco et al. 2023). One of the most important outcomes has been a fundamental pedagogical shift toward student-centered environments that emphasize meaningful communication about familiar topics in more authentic scenarios. Curriculum, instruction and assessment are now more coherently aligned across grade levels, enabling teachers to design their classes with clearer objectives in mind and monitor learner progress using common reference points.

To consolidate the gains obtained so far and ensure sustained progress, several recommendations are provided. First, English instruction time should be increased, particularly in early grades, to build foundational skills and support long-term language acquisition. Second, targeted investment must prioritize rural and under-resourced schools to reduce inequities in teacher preparation and access to learning materials. Third, future teacher training programmes should emphasize context-responsive models that promote classroom-based inquiry and encourage peer collaboration. Fourth, gender and regional disparities in performance should be systematically monitored and addressed through data-informed interventions. Lastly, national CEFR-aligned proficiency targets should be clearly articulated with structured learning pathways that enable more students to reach B2 or higher levels (Araya-Garita and González-Ramírez 2024).

A shift toward more sustained, inclusive, and context-responsive teacher development is also needed to ensure the long-term success of the CEFR in Costa Rica. Teachers require long-term accompaniment to fully understand, internalize and adapt CEFR descriptors to their local realities. Online CEFR resource hubs can also provide language instructors with more equitable access to context-tailored teaching materials, sample lesson plans created by actual teachers, and assessment tools. Peer-coaching and teacher learning communities can facilitate co-construction of CEFR-aligned practices. Collaborative spaces would allow teachers to share strategies for adapting CEFR descriptors to real classroom conditions and to contextualize CEFR progression scales based on student performance (Araya-Garita 2021).

Ultimately, teacher professional development is the cornerstone of effective CEFR implementation, enabling educators to make informed, autonomous, and equitable pedagogical decisions. Since the CEFR is a flexible framework rather than a prescriptive syllabus, its successful adoption depends on teachers' ability to interpret and adapt its descriptors to local contexts—designing learning pathways, identifying learner needs, and assessing language use in authentic and fair ways.

To ensure fair and meaningful learning outcomes for all students, Costa Rica must continue to prioritize integrated approaches that combine curriculum design, pedagogical practice, and assessment—anchored in the principles of the CEFR (Quesada-Pacheco et al. 2023).

Strengthening digital infrastructure and access to it can help promote more equitable access to standardized assessment and mitigate the digital divide, particularly in remote regions. Expanding teacher training in language assessment and digital literacy is vital to help educators interpret test data and align instruction effectively (Araya-Garita 2021).

In Costa Rica, the adoption of CEFR has resulted in major advancements in the light of the objectives it was meant to help achieve: to modernize instruction, reduce regional disparities, and enable comparability of outcomes across educational institutions (Alianza para el Bilingüismo 2018; Quesada-Pacheco et al. 2023). With continued political will, stakeholder engagement, and inclusive policy design, Costa Rica can continue to build a more robust, equitable, and internationally competitive language education system.

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## 10 Biographies

**Ana C. González-Ramírez**, MA in Teaching English as a Foreign Language, is a faculty member at the University of Costa Rica, where she has taught for over sixteen years. Her research focuses on language assessment and the localization of testing practices to enhance the quality and fairness of English education in Costa Rica. As an active member of the PELEx program, she has contributed to studies on test constructs, regional score variation, and CEFR alignment. Her professional interests also include ESP course and curriculum design, teacher development, and educational outreach.

**Walter Araya-Garita** is a full professor and researcher at the University of Costa Rica (UCR) specializing in language testing and assessment, with over 25 years of experience. He is the founder of the Language Assessment and Training Program (PELEx) at UCR and has played a key role in advancing language evaluation initiatives nationally and regionally. Walter has served as secretary of the Latin American Association for Language Testing and Assessment (LAALTA) for two years. He holds an MA in Teaching English as a Foreign Language and an MSc in Administration from the University of Costa Rica, as well as a specialization in Educational Planning from the National Institute of Educational Planning and Administration (NIEPA) in India.