CEFR in Thailand: A Case Study of English Teachers' Perception of Education Policy Change in Two Southern Regions

Jens Martin Franz

A Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of Master of Arts in Teaching English as an International Language
Prince of Songkla University
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This is to certify that the work here submitted is the result of the candidate's own investigations. Due acknowledgement has been made of any assistance received.

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I hereby certify that this work has not been accepted in substance for any degree, and is not being currently submitted in candidature for any degree.

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Abstract

Thailand has seen several English language curriculum reforms over the last twenty years, all of which were found to have failed to lift the standard of English language proficiency of Thai students at all levels. The Ministry of Education in 2014 adopted the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) to improve the standard of English learning and teaching in Thailand's schools. How this education policy change was communicated to and perceived by English language teachers at state secondary schools in four provinces in the south of Thailand is examined in this case study, using grounded theory methodology, combining document analysis, a questionnaire, and semi-structured in-depth interviews as research instruments. The three research questions were: a) What do state secondary school teachers understand CEFR to be, and what impact do they perceive it to have on them and their teaching? b) What are the factors that influence teachers' attitudes to and degrees of support for the introduction of CEFR? and c) What is the relative efficacy of channels and mechanisms used in communicating English language teaching policy?

The study found divergence in teachers' understanding of the CEFR policy plans, associating the acronym mostly with the six-level proficiency scale and an online placement test the teachers had been required to take. The main factors contributing to teachers' dispositions were identified as policy change fatigue, policy communication deficiencies, and teachers' high level of extra-curricular workload. This study also found that their responses to policy change in the form of CEFR introduction was not defined by demographic factors, and that teachers revealed a high degree of individuality in their responses.

Acknowledgements

First and foremost, I would like to express my gratitude to my supervisor, Associate Professor Dr. Adisa Teo, for her positivity, patience, and pragmatism which have helped to see me through the process of completing this thesis. Many thanks are also due to the committee members, Dr. Supanit Kulsiri and Dr. Kristof Savski, and in the earlier stages, Associate Professor Dr. Thanyapa Palanukulwong, who have helped shape this report into form and provided me with valuable feedback. Any errors and shortcomings remain the responsibility of the author of course.

Faculty and staff at the Teaching English as an International Language (TEIL) master's program at the Faculty of Liberal Arts have also taught me a lot over the two years of being a student there.

Further, I would like to very much thank the Graduate School of Prince of Songkla University, Associate Professor Dr. Urai Hattakit in particular, for granting me a working scholarship which not only eased the burden of tuition fees and maintenance costs, but also provided me with an opportunity to learn about the Thai education and administrative system through practice. I appreciate all the support and explanations provided by my colleagues there.

The number of people who have helped in the process of conducting this research are too numerous to mention, and have been assured of confidentiality too. But they know who they are, and I am most grateful to all of them.

I dedicate this thesis to all the English teachers who took the time to talk, fill out the questionnaire, and try and explain the workings of the Thai education system to me. I wish that, in some infinitesimally small way, this work will contribute towards fulfilling the teachers' hope that 'they' [the policymakers] would listen and better understand the situation of teachers.

Jens Martin Franz

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List of Abbreviations

AEC	ASEAN Economic Community
CEFR	Common European Framework of Reference
CLT	Communicative Language Teaching
CoE	Council of Europe
EFL	English as a Foreign Language
ELI	English Language Institute (subsidiary of OBEC)
ELT	English Language Teaching
ERIC	English Resource and Information Centre
ESB	English Standards-Based (Curriculum)
ESL	English as a Second Language
GTM	Grounded Theory Methodology
LPP	Language Policy and Planning
MoE	Ministry of Education
OBEC	Office of the Basic Education Commission
OECD	Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development
O-NET	Ordinary National Educational Test
PISA	Programme for International Student Assessment
SEA	Secondary Educational Service Area Office
TPQI	Thailand Professional Qualification Institute

List of Paper and Proceeding

"'A2 is Normal' - Thai Secondary School English Teachers' Encounters with CEFR," submitted to *RELC Journal*, reviewers recommended publication subject to further minor revision.

Evidence of Manuscript Submission

From: marie.yeo@relc.org.sg

Subject: RELC Journal - Decision on Manuscript ID RELC-17-0131.R1

Body: 28-Aug-2017

Dear Mr. Franz:

Manuscript ID RELC-17-0131.R1 entitled "'A2 is Normal' - Thai Secondary School English Teachers' Encounters with CEFR" which you submitted to RELC Journal, has been reviewed. The comments of the reviewer(s) are included at the bottom of this letter.

I am pleased to inform you that the reviewer(s) have recommended publication subject to FURTHER MINOR REVISION. I invite you to respond to the reviewer(s)' comments and revise your manuscript. Please submit your revisions within 30 days.

[…]

Once again, thank you for submitting your manuscript to RELC Journal and I look forward to receiving your revision.

Sincerely,

Dr Marie Yeo, Editor-in-Chief
on behalf of Editors, RELC Journal
marie.yeo@relc.org.sg

Date Sent: 28-Aug-2017

A Synthesis Report

1 Introduction

> Why do we have to have a *Boot Camp*, why do we have to cause so much upheaval? Why do we have to be so *serious* about English language? I would like to *inform* – those of us assembled on this stage already know it – the media may learn in turn – [I] would like to *inform how critical English* [sic!] *in the system of education in Thailand*. We know it is *critical*, there are just too many reasons […].
>
> Gen. Dapong Ratanasuwan, (OBEC TV, 2016)
>
> [Translation by the author. Emphasis indicates English words used in the minister's Thai speech.]

These were the opening words of then Education Minister of Thailand, General Dapong Ratanasuwan, at a press conference jointly held with the British Council (Thailand) on October 13th, 2016 in Bangkok to launch a training program ('Boot Camp') for Thai teachers of English at state primary and secondary schools. The minister went on to list some of the 'too many reasons' why English was 'critical', and they summarize the general national discourse on English language proficiency in Thailand:

- a globalized world in which Thailand cannot isolate itself;
- the low ranking of Thailand in a UNESCO ranking of English language proficiency in non-native speaking countries;
- the formation of the ASEAN Economic Community (AEC) with its language of communication being English, and many of Thailand's neighbours having much better English skills;
- the consistently low English language score of Thai primary and secondary school students in the national standardized test O-NET;[1]
- the opportunities provided to English language speakers in the digital age (access to information) and the need for such skills in Thailand 4.0;
- the low number of English lessons at primary school level;
- a perpetual focus on teaching English grammar rather than English for communication;

[1] A national test of five core subjects for all schools, based on multiple choice and error correction items, taken by students at the end of Years 6, 9, and 12.

- and finally, the low level of English language proficiency of the English teachers themselves:

> We tested the [42,000] teachers' English language according to the CEFR standard, and we found that – oh, teachers, we are talking about teachers here – 2,000 scored below A1. And how many passed B2, the level we consider adequate for teaching? 875. What does that mean? The children cannot learn. Thais not being able to speak English – that's probably down to the teachers. Therefore, this teacher development program we are launching will be the most serious in the history of Thailand. (OBEC TV, 2016)

The minister's closing remark places the focus (and arguably, apportions blame) for Thailand's poor English proficiency on Thai teachers of English. The implication of his presentation of the combined test statistics for 30,000 primary school and 12,000 secondary school English teachers was that 98% of the teachers were underqualified to teach English. As can be seen in Figures 1 and 2, the average proficiency level of primary school English teachers (Figure 1) was markedly lower than that of secondary school English teachers (Figure 2). The implications of this test and its outcome, as well as the boot camp teacher development program, will be explored further in the research findings and discussion.

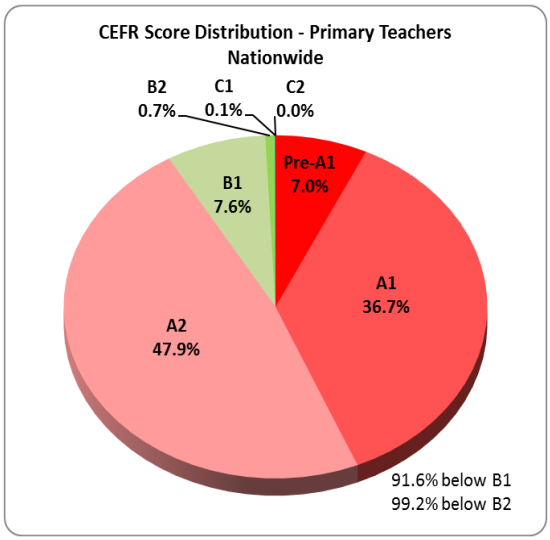

Figure 1. CEFR score distribution for primary school English teachers

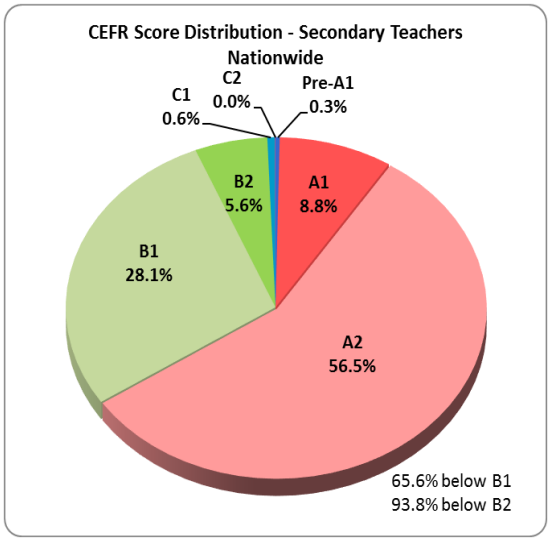

Figure 2. CEFR score distribution for secondary school English teachers

Thailand had in the preceding two decades experienced two basic education curriculum reforms which, at least in the case of English language teaching, had been

found to fall short of expectations. In early 2014, the Ministry of Education (MoE) had declared that CEFR, the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages, would be the key conceptual framework for teaching and learning English in Thailand, and both the teacher development programme and the test of teachers' English language proficiency mentioned by the minister were part of that government policy.

The author had the opportunity to observe how notions of CEFR were reaching English teachers at state secondary schools in the far south of Thailand, starting with that nationwide test of English teachers' language proficiency in May 2015, and later-on both as a trainer at teacher development workshops and as a master's degree student at Prince of Songkla University. There seemed to be a disjuncture between the policy declarations by the ministry in Bangkok and the observable cognisance of this policy by provincial education authorities and schools. Therefore, a case study of the way in which CEFR was introduced and how it was perceived and understood by Thai teachers of English at secondary state schools in the south of Thailand was chosen as the topic of this thesis research project. While the CEFR policy applies to both primary and secondary state schools, this study will focus on secondary school English teachers only, and all further reference to teachers from here on should be read as 'Thai secondary state school teachers of English' unless mentioned otherwise.

2 Literature Review

In order to contextualise the research design and findings historically, comparatively, and theoretically, the literature review will establish the role of English and previous English language curriculum reforms in Thai education, look at the introduction of CEFR to English language curricula in Thailand and other education systems, with Japan and Vietnam serving as two Asian examples here. The review will conclude by briefly outlining the constructs of language education policy and teacher professional identity.

2.1 The Status of English in Thai Schools

The teaching of English as a subject in Thai schools (as well as the concept of secular schools) goes back to the reign of King Chulalongkorn (Rama V). The historian David Wyatt described how the administrative reforms of King Rama V were seen as

instrumental in helping Thailand (then 'Siam') to understand and withstand the advance of European colonial powers in Asia at the time (Fry, 2002). Aksornkool (1981) observed that during the reign of King Rama VI "the status of English had become more and more important. In the 1913 curriculum, for instance, English lessons were given definite priorities over other subjects [including Thai]" (pp. 96–7). In 1921, English was made a compulsory subject for all students beyond grade 4, even though the actual target group was only those students who would go on to study at university. Aksornkool suggests that "Rama VI's preference for English might have started a trend whereby English held the most prestige and priority of all educational languages in Thailand" (p. 97).

Fast-forwarding from the Siamese origins of English language teaching to present-day Thailand: the current national curriculum of 2008 uses the general term 'foreign language' throughout, mentioning only once that the compulsory foreign language taught during the 14-year period of free basic education (pre-school to key-stage 12) is indeed English:

> The foreign language constituting basic learning content that is prescribed for the entire basic education core curriculum is English, while for other foreign languages, e.g., French, German, Chinese, Japanese, Arabic, Pali and languages of neighbouring countries, it is left to the discretion of educational institutions to prepare courses and provide learning management as appropriate.
>
> (Ministry of Education, Thailand 2008, p. 252)

The fact that the state claims control over the teaching of English while leaving other foreign languages to the discretion of individual schools suggests that English language skills are deemed to be of national importance. English is also the only subject that has its own dedicated body, the English Language Institute (ELI), tasked with the promotion and support of teaching English at Thai schools.

The 2008 curriculum, like the two preceding curricula of 1996 and 2001, provide globalisation as their key rationale for the inclusion of English as a core subject. Many Thai master's and Ph.D. theses concerned with the state of English language (teaching) in Thailand invoke the concepts of English as a global language, as an international language or World Englishes, citing relevant authors in the field such as Crystal, Kachru, or Pennycook as their research rationale. The trope of globalisation is

present in the academic as well as the general national discourse, but in case of the latter it is framed in terms of educating a workforce fit for competition in a 21st-century global economy, as Minister Dapong's speech quoted above exemplifies. Government statements frequently articulate[2] English language with ICT skills as essential requisites for a knowledge-based economy.

2.2 English Language Curriculum Change

Thailand has seen a number of education reforms over the decades, and the latest major reform was passed into law as the 1999 National Education Act, promoting the decentralisation of educational administration and calling for "innovative learner-centred teaching practices" to be used in Thai schools (Ministry of Education, 2008).

As part of that reform, a new English language curriculum was drafted and implemented in 2001 as the English Language Standards-Based (ESB) curriculum which received a further update in 2008, and has been the subject of several research studies and articles. Three PhD dissertations (Fitzpatrick, 2011; Kulsiri, 2006; Nonthaisong, 2015) and one master's thesis (Thongsri, 2005) will be introduced and compared for their theoretical underpinnings, research methodologies, and findings.

Chronologically first came the study by Thongsri (2005) who conducted a questionnaire-based survey of state school teachers' attitudes towards the 2001 English language curriculum, their perception of the degree to which they had implemented the curriculum, and difficulties they had encountered. The study was conducted in Songkhla province in the south of Thailand at the time the curriculum was being implemented (the year 2004), and the data was analysed at the level of 3 educational sub-regions. Thongsri's overall findings were that the teachers were very positively disposed towards the new curriculum, believed that they had implemented it to a

[2] 'Articulation' in this thesis is used in the sense defined by Stuart Hall and Ernesto Laclau: The term combines the semantic fields of linguistic expression (what Hall called 'language-ing') and connection/joining of two separate elements which can be, but do not have to be joined to form a unit (as in 'articulated lorry'). Highlighting the articulation of separate constructs by a speaker or institution thus draws attention to the question of agency and hegemony. For an overview of the concept of articulation see Clarke (2015).

significant degree, but also saw several problems with it. The problems her questionnaire results showed teachers to regard as the biggest obstacles to successful curriculum implementation were (in order of severity):

- Exam washback from the national university entrance exams (O-Net)
- The community not being supportive of using English in real life
- Students not seeing the value of learning English
- Students' low proficiency level obstructing the use of Communicative Language Teaching (CLT)
- The curriculum containing too many benchmarks, some of which were difficult to implement
- Class sizes being too large

What is noteworthy in this thesis is that the viability of the curriculum itself remained unquestioned by the researcher, as is evident when she states that her research

> will be helpful to school administrators to improve teaching situations and to solve the problems which obstruct the success of the implementation of the curriculum. In addition, the results may be helpful to policy makers as the basis for further policy making to bridge the gap between the policy and its implementation. (pp. 4–5)

Thongsri did observe some classes as part of her research and noticed a discrepancy between teachers' stated degree of curriculum implementation and the 'actual' level of implementation observed by her, but put this down to the fact that she had only observed isolated classes, and the missing elements might be evidenced at different times during the term or years of study.

The next thesis discussed here, by Kulsiri (2006), made a point of critiquing previous curriculum studies that had gone before it for having been concerned only with curriculum implementation and evaluation. Her research was based mainly on the analysis of curriculum documents and interviews with eight curriculum developers, i.e. the policymakers, but also encompassed a teacher questionnaire and interviews with seven school teachers. Whereas Thongsri had taken the 2001 curriculum text as the basis of her questionnaire, Kulsiri took a step back to critically analyse and contextualise the curriculum text in the wider context of EFL discourse, pointing out inconsistencies in the process. One of her findings was that

> The curriculum developers assumed that the curriculum […] would be accepted by school teachers. Therefore, workshops were not created to convince teachers of the validity of the curriculum philosophies and to describe the principles underlying the standards. […] 15 out of 20 teachers did not receive the training or knowledge necessary for English language teaching and learning.
>
> (p.322)

If Kulsiri's questionnaire was a representative reflection of the overall teacher population, it would have meant that 75% of Thai English language teachers had not received such training. Her interviews with curriculum developers also revealed that they had initially not thought it necessary to provide any training in ELT methodologies underlying the curriculum as teachers were expected to study those by themselves (p.295).

Thongsri in her questionnaire regarding problems teachers encountered in implementing the curriculum contained one question about the curriculum's lack of clarity and one about the insufficiency of training received. Both these problems were classed as "fairly serious" by the Songkhla teachers, but not discussed further in her research. Kulsiri stated that English teachers were pitied by their colleagues not only because they had to implement the curriculum and new teaching methods, but also because they were under public pressure and scrutiny due to the then Prime-Minister Thaksin Shinawatra having linked English language education with social and economic development.

Kulsiri's main finding in her analysis of the 2001 ESB curriculum development process was that the curriculum itself was incoherent and contradictory, making it very difficult if not impossible for schoolteachers to interpret and implement. One example she cites is the coverage of teaching methodologies in the curriculum, where "learning theories, approaches and methods were not presented in a coherent and connected way" (p.293), but organised in an arbitrary fashion, leaving it to the teachers to make sense of the random list of methods provided. Another contradiction she points towards is the issue of assessment:

> The contradictions between in-class evaluation and the national test could bring about the largest non-coherence between implementation of the curriculum and different government agenda.

> This means that what curriculum developers claimed as freedom in teaching and learning does not exist in reality. In the end, teachers have no choice but to teach for the [national O-Net] test. (p.325)

Kulsiri also pointed to a curriculum development history which saw personnel changes during the drafting process, combined with a lack of communication and a tendency by the curriculum developers to adopt progressive Western educational language by inscribing terms such as 'critical,' 'learner-centred,' or CLT in the curriculum without discussing and defining what they actually meant, leading to the perpetuation of the traditional socio-economic and ends-based education style rather than the reform advocated.

The remaining two studies by Fitzpatrick (2011) and Nonthaisong (2015) were in fact based on the updated 2008 ESB curriculum, and both studied teachers in North-East Thailand. Fitzpatrick in his rationale wanted to explore the ideologies underlying the 2008 English language curriculum by using a combination of social constructionism and critical theory. His research questions were which teaching practices the teachers observed used in their classrooms, what their underlying beliefs and dispositions were for their use, and how their practices and beliefs related to the English language policy. Fitzpatrick found that teachers engaged in a range of teaching practices, owing to their individual backgrounds, and that while most teachers were aware of the concept and policy of communicative language learning, he found little evidence of such practices in the classrooms, which he attributed to English being a subject to be learnt and not a communicative tool in the communities studied, and the focus on the external exam. Nonthaisong's thesis echoed the work of Fitzpatrick in most aspects and did not contribute anything new to the debate, other than the recommendation for the centre (MoE and OBEC) to produce more ready-made teaching materials for teachers to use, a suggestion that seems to contradict the drive to decentralisation initiated by the 1999 Education Act, and a call for guidelines on how teaching could serve both the demands from the O-Net exam and the 2008 curriculum.

In conclusion, previous changes to the English language curriculum for Thai schools have been deemed ineffective in improving Thai students' standards of English, with researchers, policymakers and commentators pointing to the continually low student scores in national standardized exams as well as Thailand's consistently low

ranking in regional and global English proficiency league tables as evidence. All three previous English language curricula had contained prescriptions for the use of Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) activities in the classroom, but analysis of those curricula and their implementation suggests that CLT had not been widely adopted due to the four main factors shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Factors preventing curriculum implementation

	Fitzpatrick	Kulsiri	Nonthaisong	Thongsri
Lack of communication about and clarity of the educational philosophy underlying the curriculum	✓	✓		✓
Lack of training provision for in-service teachers	✓	✓	✓	✓
Negative exam washback	✓	✓	✓	✓
Environment not being conducive to learning English		✓		✓

2.3 Introducing CEFR to Raise English Proficiency

In January 2014, the MoE announced a new initiative to reform the teaching of English in Thailand:

> The European Council's framework of reference for language proficiency (CEFR) shall be the key conceptual framework for teaching and learning English in Thailand, including curriculum planning, learning and teaching development, exam design, assessment, teacher development, and the setting of learning targets.
> [Translation by the author] (English Language Institute, 2015, p.1)

The CEFR reference levels (A1 to C2) feature prominently in the Thai policy documents related to this policy, and proficiency targets for students in basic education were defined by the MoE as follows:

Table 2. CEFR target levels for students in basic education (English Language Institute, 2015, p.2)

Student Level	Language competency Level	CEFR Level
Primary Grade 6	Basic user	A1
Secondary Grade 3	Basic user	A2
Secondary Grade 6 / Vocational Grade 3	Independent user	B1

Other reform measures mentioned in the policy are the alignment of national exams with the framework, the use of CLT in language teaching, utilising online distant learning technologies, and the assessment and further development of English teachers' proficiency and teaching skills (pp.3-6). The MoE's 2014 announcement of its "English language teaching reform policy" articulated a nexus between CEFR as a framework, and CLT as a teaching method, supported by the application of online applications. While CLT was being given a relaunch, CEFR was indeed new to English language teaching policy in Thailand.

CEFR was developed by the Council of Europe (CoE) over a period of two decades, the final draft being published in 2001 with the aim of having a descriptive standard which would allow the comparison of language proficiency across different languages, a relevant consideration in the European Union with its internal labour market and 27 official languages (North, 2007). CLT as an approach emerged coevally with the development of the CEFR, but CoE documents and CEFR developers state that the framework is not wedded to any particular teaching method (North, 2008). And while social-constructivism is, arguably, still the dominant paradigm in international EFL teacher training programmes, there have been voices in academic EFL discourse (Block, 2002; Canagarajah, 2005) who question the suitability of exporting wholesale the communicative and task-based approach to countries with varying cultural contexts. Not so in Thailand. Thai politicians display a strong sense of nationalism and parochialism in many fields, but Thai education policy discourse has questioned neither the importance of English language skills, nor the suitability of communicative teaching approaches advocated by English examination and tuition providers such as Cambridge English or the British Council. The arrival of the ASEAN Economic Community (AEC) in 2015, with its nascent internal labour market and English as its sole 'working language,' focused policymakers' minds, raising concerns about the nation's economic competitiveness. The adoption of CEFR and subsequent contracting of the British Council to deliver a CLT-based training program for Thai English language teachers were presented as a solution to Thailand's *English language problem* (Mala, 2016).

As Kulsiri (2006) and Sae-Lao (2013) have shown in their analyses of education reform, such policy borrowing – a term strongly associated with Steiner-Khamsi, who actually argued that education policies were borrowed from other countries not because

they were better, but due to underlying political agendas (Steiner-Khamsi, 2006, p.671) – is a well-established practice in Thai education. In the case of CEFR, Thailand joined many other countries in adopting and adapting the framework with a view of reforming their English language curriculums and assessment mechanisms.

Japanese academics between 2006 and 2012 developed CEFR-J, a standard to suit the Japanese EFL context by re-mapping the can-do statements and sub-dividing the lower proficiency levels A and B by adding six additional sub-levels, including a pre-A1 level, to allow for more differentiation at those levels which are more relevant to the majority of Japanese learners (Tono, 2012). Conducting an impact analysis in 2014, Negishi found that while CEFR-J's sub-levels were appreciated in providing learners with tangible feedback on their progress, the national policy discourse and established language tests continued to reference the original CEFR framework rather than CEFR-J (Negishi & Tono, 2014).

The Government of Vietnam in 2008 ratified 'Project 2020', a 12-year plan to improve English language proficiency by basing reform efforts around CEFR, prescribing student proficiency targets identical to the Thai ones shown in Table 2, and B2 as provisional target level for its English teachers, aiming for them to eventually achieve level C1 as Project 2020 progressed. Inspired by CEFR-J, the government in 2014 established CEFR-V, which unlike the Japanese adaptation retained the six-level scale, but aimed to facilitate 'teaching of English under Vietnamese conditions in accordance with European standards' (Chung, 2014).

2.4 Language Education Policy and its Implementation

The previous sections have referred to terms such as language education policy and policy implementation, but not elaborated on these constructs. Summarising a range of definitions which have emerged in the field of LPP, Johnson (2013) offers the following synthesised definition of language policy and what it encompasses:

> A language policy is a policy mechanism that impacts the structure, function, use, or acquisition of language and includes:
>
> 1. Official regulations – often enacted in the form of written documents, intended to effect some change in the form, function, use, or acquisition of language – which can influence economic, political, and educational opportunity;

> 2. Unofficial, covert, de facto, and implicit mechanisms, connected to language beliefs and practices, that have regulating power over language use and interaction within communities, workplaces, and schools;
>
> 3. Not just products but processes – "policy" as a verb, not a noun – that are driven by a diversity of language policy agents across multiple layers of policy creation, interpretation, appropriation, and instantiation;
>
> 4. Policy texts and discourses across multiple contexts and layers of policy activity, which are influenced by the ideologies and discourses unique to that context. (p. 9)

Spolsky (2007, p. 27) defines language education policy as a significant part of language policy, comprising the practices and beliefs of the members of a speech community, and "management," a term he prefers to "policy(-making)" to describe the modification of a group's language use. In his encyclopaedia article entitled "Investigating Language Education Policy", he suggests three main research questions to guide the research process: "What is the policy?", "Why this policy?", and "How is the policy implemented?" Spolsky asserts: "it is clear that a careful description will reveal major discrepancies between various parts of the policy and between the policy and its implementation" (p. 32).

In their state-of-the-art review of LPP research in 1996, and with specific reference to English language teaching (emphasising ELT and ESL over EFL), Ricento and Hornberger (1996) presented an onion metaphor to describe how the agents, levels (national, institutional, interpersonal), and processes (policy formation, implementation, evaluation) of LPP were permeable layers of the LPP construct as a whole (p. 408). In terms of the agents in their model, they placed classroom practitioners at the heart of their model.

> In the ELT literature, the practitioner is often an afterthought who implements what "experts" in the government, board of education, or central school administration have already decided. The practitioner often needs to be "educated," "studied," "cajoled," "tolerated," even "replaced" by better prepared (even more pliant) teachers. (p. 417)

Ricento and Hornberger cite researchers such as Auerbach and Freeman and their call for teachers to engage in action research and participatory approaches, arguing

that, in contrast to the portrayal quoted above, ELT professionals "are policy transmitters and can become policymakers if they so desire" (p. 420).

While most of the article draws heavily on examples from the United States, examples which may be of limited applicability in other contexts, the following characterisation of education policy implementation in centralised states resonates strongly with the Thai situation observed in this study:

> In countries with highly centralized state structures […] several layers of intermediate actors (e.g., state boards of education, commissioners of education, program directors) may lie between the persons or bodies who promulgate and disseminate broad policy guidelines and those who actually implement a particular policy, for example, classroom teachers. Usually, policies change as they move down through administrative levels, either explicitly in new written documents or through interpretation of existing documents. (p. 417)

Whereas Ricento and Hornberger encourage teachers to discover their agency and become policymakers themselves at the implementation level – their classrooms, the observation that policies change as they travel through administrative layers located between the national authorities promulgating policies and the teachers tasked with implementing them, the how and why of such changes does not get elaborated. The three levels mapped onto the onion by Ricento and Hornberger are reflected by Johnson and Johnson (2014), who open up that meso-level between the macro and the micro levels, and provide an additional dimension of levels which emphasises the agency of individuals: creation, interpretation, appropriation.

> [P]olicies are first created as a result of intertextual and interdiscursive links to past and present policy texts and discourses. Once a policy has been created and put into motion, it is open to diverse interpretations, both by those who created it, and by those who are expected to appropriate it in practice.
>
> (Johnson & Johnson, 2014, p. 223)

These actions may be mapped to the levels of national – institutional – interpersonal, but each can indeed occur at any level. Invoking Foucault's theory of governmentality, Johnson and Johnson introduce the distinction between language policy "arbiters" and mere "implementers" to investigate who the actors are that get positioned as arbiters in the implementation and appropriation of state-level policies (p. 225).

Summarising the accounts of LPP presented in this section in relation to language education policy implementation, it can be said that LPP problematises a simplistic top-down model of language policy planning and implementation which locates the policymaking at the top and the implementation at the bottom of the hierarchy, and instead investigates the interpretive spaces opening up at many levels of the LPP process, and encourages particularly teachers to embrace the agency afforded by such openings.

2.4.1 Media Content Analysis: Education Policy Discourse in the Public Sphere

Media content analysis is another approach to analysing education policy processes, as proffered by Saraisky (2016) in her methodology article on the study of US newspaper coverage of the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) national ranking results. The underlying logic of such an analysis is that media content can illustrate "how public communication influences and reflects understandings about education in the public sphere" (p. 26). Besides quantitative analysis of the newspaper coverage, Saraisky analysed the content at the article-level, looking at the ways in which the PISA topic was framed, and at the speaker-level, identifying which actors were given a voice in the public debate. As Saraisky freely admitted, the media content analysis approach is not without its limitations though: there is an inherent elite bias in focusing on established national "quality" newspapers, other media formats are ignored, and the influence of media on policy processes, while widely acknowledged, is difficult to measure. Despite these limitations, Saraisky sees its usefulness in providing a measure of the dominant arguments in education discourse both within and between countries: "Nonetheless, if done well, media analysis provides a reliable, valid and replicable method for understanding the public context of education" (p. 38).

However, the emergence and popularity of electronic social media platforms has changed media production and consumption patterns across the globe, and arguably also changed the role and significance of established media in defining and reflecting education policy discourse. From a viewpoint which assumes or acknowledges hierarchy in the policy communication process, the communication related to education policy change can be seen to be predominantly vertical, between policymakers and practitioners, and usually top-down in its directionality. But in addition to that, there is

also a horizontal dimension, between in-service teachers tasked with implementing the education policies, a dimension which has been much augmented and extended beyond face-to-face communication with the arrival of electronic social media platforms.

2.4.2 Teachers' Communication Practices Related to Curriculum Change

While Kulsiri (2006) in her study had found that English language teachers complained about professional isolation, having to implement curriculum changes on their own without a peer network to discuss, the prevalence of social media such as Facebook™ and Line™ throughout Thailand means that, at the time of the present study, Thai English language teachers were, even if they might not discuss and collaborate on designing their lesson plans, certainly connected with other teachers in social networks. As Datnow (2012) pointed out in her study of educators in the US, teachers' use of social media may be leveraged to effect positive change, but also has the power to thwart changes. In Southern Thailand, teacher groups are often formed on social media networks on the school level, on the regional educational area level along subject lines, and on a national level. To which extent these networks play a role in English language teachers' discourse on policy change and implementation has, to the author's knowledge, not yet been the subject of analysis.

2.5 Teacher Professionalism, Identity, and Cognition

In public discourse on educational change (and the role of teachers in that process of change), the matter of teacher professionalism is often invoked, prescribing/defining what teachers should be/know/do, the qualities of a "good teacher." But who defines this construct? Looking at England, Leung (2009) observed that the concept of what a teacher should be and what qualifications they should have had changed over time, and, quoting a comparative study between England and Norway, that the respective education ministries in those two countries had constructed schoolteacher professionalism very differently, with the latter emphasising social and moral dimensions in addition to teaching skills. Focusing on the ELT profession and the diverse range of teacher qualification requirements, Leung concludes that there is no single concept of ELT language teacher professionalism which applies across different context, either nationally or internationally. "The diversity in teacher

qualifications signals that at the collective level publicly endorsed teacher professionalism is context-sensitive, reflecting historical, social, political, and ideological contingencies" (p. 51).

He distinguishes between two types of professionalism: the "sponsored professionalism" mentioned above, invoked by institutions or authorities and "usually proclaimed on behalf of teachers as a collectivity" (p. 49), and "independent professionalism" – individual teachers' notions of their professionalism, which may or may not coincide with the former. In Leung's description, the independent professionalism is a reaction to the projections of sponsored professionalism. Teachers need to make personal decisions: "to comply professionally with sponsored models and /or regulatory requirements and their associated values, or to question their educational, pedagogic, and social validity" (p. 53). Leung sees the latter stance as the way to keep ELT professionalism relevant: being open to change, but evaluating and reacting to changes proposed in the guise of sponsored professionalism from a critical and reflective position.

Language teachers' professional identity has come to be seen as being an important part of the larger construct of language teacher cognition. Synthesising a wide range of studies into teacher cognition, notably among them Woods' (1996) study on Canadian ESL teachers, which led him to propose the BAK construct of beliefs, assumptions, and knowledge to encompass the interrelatedness and complexity of factors involved in teachers' classroom decision-making, Borg (2006) arrived at the following definition of teacher cognition:

> An often tacit, personally-held, practical system of mental constructs held by teachers […] which are dynamic – that is defined and refined on the basis of educational and professional experiences throughout teachers' lives. (p. 38)

In a more recent update to his 2006 survey of research on language teacher cognition, Borg (2012) explicitly extended the above definition to

> also include as part of teacher cognition constructs such as attitudes, identities and emotions, in recognition of the fact that these are all aspects of the unobservable dimension of teaching. Identity, in particular, […] should be recognised as an important strand of teacher cognition research. (p. 11).

This, extended, definition of the construct will be applied in the present study as well. As Borg observed, much of the literature and research in the fields of teacher cognition and teacher identity focuses on pre-service teachers and teacher training, as this period is considered to be the formative stage. Questions surrounding the cognition and identity of in-service teachers had in the past been paid less attention to in educational research, and EFL research in particular (p. 11), although that picture seemed to be shifting towards more studies being conducted on in-service teachers when Borg published his 2012 update.

Thongsri (2005) in her research of teachers' attitudes toward curriculum change in southern Thailand, combining questionnaires with classroom observations, found that there was a discrepancy between what teachers professed to be practicing and what she observed them to actually be practicing in the classroom. Borg (2006) in his review of studies on teacher cognition concluded that such a discrepancy is quite commonly observed. Fitzpatrick (2011, p. 47), quoting Thongsri's study, also points to other research into teacher attitudes which shows that further training of teachers has often made no or very little impact on teachers' disposition to a new curriculum/ teaching method. Drawing on Bourdieu's concepts of *habitus* and *field* for his study, Fitzpatrick (p. 44) located differences in teachers' attitudes at the school level, pointing out that teachers' very notion of what the construct 'school' entailed differed between a school located in the capital city Bangkok, a provincial capital, and a rural village. Studies conducted in other parts of the world have also found that teacher attitude can be a crucial factor when it comes to implementing curriculum change, and can, as in the case of Jordan in the 1990's (Alshorfat, 2011), lead teachers to reject a curriculum they feel imposes too high a workload on them.

3 Objectives

As mentioned in the Introduction, the researcher witnessed the administration of the online placement test for teachers in May 2015. In August and September 2015, he was invited as a native speaker (NS) trainer at workshops organised for teachers who had scored A1 or A2 in the aforementioned test. These two events were also the researcher's own first encounter with the CEFR framework: coming from a German/British social anthropology/media studies background, he was new to the

fields of language policy and language proficiency testing. That being said, however, vague notions about English language teaching in Thailand had been formed by conversations with teachers and exposure to Thai media coverage.

The CEFR framework itself, as well as teachers' seeming unawareness of the MoE's policy plans, became a topic of interest. This was further explored in the master's degree programme in Teaching English as an International Language at Prince of Songkla University, where the researcher also had a chance to observe other teacher training events. Therefore, when the time came to choose a research topic for the master's thesis in December 2015, the introduction of CEFR seemed a suitable choice. The ensuing literature review and thesis proposal development were conducted within the structure of the master's programme, but informal conversations about the topic with secondary school teachers and administrators continued in parallel, suggesting the choice of Grounded Theory Methodology (GTM) as research method for this project (see Section 5.1 and Figure 3 below for details).

The aim of this thesis research project was to examine how this current curriculum change, the introduction of CEFR was being perceived and understood by English language teachers in state secondary (*Mathayom*) schools in the south of Thailand. The underlying rationale was that, despite advances in online and distance learning, teachers are still the main interface between the curriculum and learners, since, as mentioned by Fitzpatrick (2011) and Kulsiri (2006) amongst others, it is the teachers in the classrooms who have to implement any changes to the curriculum. It is also the teachers who are likely to be blamed if a curriculum change does not produce the intended results (Nonthaisong, 2015), a point vividly made by Minister Dapong above.

Fitzpatrick (2011) in his thesis foregrounded the question of how teachers 'made sense' of the English language curriculum. This study also places teachers' understanding of an education policy and its implications at the centre of attention. It does not take the CEFR policy statements as an absolute point of reference against which to measure teachers' degrees of understanding. Instead, CEFR is treated here as a phenomenon, an acronym which is polysemic and whose meanings are underdetermined by the policy statements which introduce and prescribe it, i.e. the term is constantly articulated with other constructs, such as CLT, assessment, government policy, etc., by those who invoke as well as those who respond to it.

4 Research Questions

RQ1: What do state secondary school teachers understand CEFR to be, and what impact do they perceive it to have on them and their teaching?

RQ2: What are the factors that influence teachers' attitudes to and degrees of support for the introduction of CEFR?

RQ3: What is the relative efficacy of channels and mechanisms used in communicating English language teaching policy?[3]

5 Methodology

The narrative of the development process for this research project, leading to GTM being chosen as research method, has been provided above in Section 3. Here, the origins and key elements of grounded theory will be presented briefly, and the application of GTM in this study, as well as other methodology-related issues such as research ethics, elaborated. A combination of three research instruments was chosen for the formal data collection phase of this project: semi-structured interviews with teachers and a teacher questionnaire, contextualised by document analysis of policy documents related to the implementation of CEFR.

5.1 Grounded Theory Methodology (GTM)

> What are grounded theory methods? Stated simply, grounded theory methods consist of systematic, yet flexible guidelines for collecting and analyzing qualitative data to construct theories 'grounded' in the data themselves. (Charmaz, 2006, p.2)

In a grounded theory approach, as refined by Charmaz and Bryant (2010), the development of the research instruments, the gathering and initial coding of the data, and the crystallisation of themes from the emerging codes mutually build upon each

[3] Research Question Three had originally been: "Which changes do teachers expect to make to their classroom teaching in reaction to the CEFR introduction, and what do they see as the strengths and limitations of CEFR in this context?"

The intention was to elicit teachers' assessment of the framework's suitability for their classroom teaching. However, the initial coding and the pilot study indicated that CEFR had not (yet) reached the schools, and the research question was therefore amended to look at the ways in which policy change was actually communicated to teachers.

other. Rather than a theory being pre-imposed to structure the data, theoretical hypothesising in grounded theory is based on the data obtained in the research process.

Grounded theory was originally defined by Strauss and Glaser in 1967 in a move to defend qualitative research against its critics, and, coming from a qualitative (Strauss) and a quantitative (Glaser) research tradition respectively, they confronted the disciplinary practices of American sociology of their time to show that qualitative research could be rigorous and systematic, and that theory could emerge from qualitative data: "Grounded theory strategies consist of systematic, but flexible, guidelines for data gathering, coding, synthesizing, categorizing, and integrating concepts for the explicit purpose of generating middle-range theory" (Charmaz & Bryant, 2010, p. 406). This study will follow the methodological direction proposed by Charmaz and Bryant, who moved grounded theory away from its positivist roots and towards a more relativist position which:

> [H]as roots in social constructivism, takes action as a central concern […] and assumes that the researcher is part of the research process […,] engage[s] in reflexivity throughout the research process, [and] assumes multiple, layered realities that shift and change under different conditions. (p. 408)

The notion of ongoing processes, and the need for them to be analysed in context as postulated by grounded theory, fits well with this study of an emerging phenomenon, the introduction of CEFR in Thai schools: announcements regarding that policy were being made by the MoE/OBEC/ELI during the research period, and continuous reflexivity by the researcher was an integral part of the research process.

Charmaz (2006, p. 166) acknowledged the difficulties faced by many student researchers, wanting to apply GTM in their projects but being bound by the linear structure and reporting requirements imposed by their programme of study. Her advice was for students to follow the structure required by their course, conduct the literature review and write their research proposal first, but to then let that acquired knowledge lie dormant until they had gathered and coded their data. The place of the literature review has been a disputed topic in grounded theory, as Glaser and Strauss had called for it to be delayed until after the analysis of the data (p. 165).

The iterative analysis of the data is known as “coding” in GTM, and its application has been the subject of some confusion and controversy between the different strands of grounded theory (Bryant, 2017, p. 117). The coding process happens at different levels of abstraction over the grounded theory analysis, with initial/open coding taking place at the level of word-by-word, line-by-line, or incident-by-incident coding (Charmaz, 2006, pp. 50-53). This is followed by a second round of coding, focused coding, to identify emerging leads from the data (p. 57). Charmaz emphasised that researchers have to adapt the coding to their specific purposes, and the underlying and overarching purpose of coding is to keep the mind open: “Whatever unit of data you begin coding in grounded theory, you use 'constant comparative methods' (Glaser & Strauss, 1967) to establish analytic distinctions – and thus make comparisons at each level of analytic work” (Charmaz, 2006, p. 54).

Bryant (2017) also argues that the methodological tools of grounded theory should be seen as a *heuristic*, as guidelines, not prescriptions: “it is futile to insist on strict adherence to one method or strategy, and particularly so in the case of GTM, which places such importance on flexibility and contingency” (p. 60). He made this point repeatedly, both with regard to coding and also to memoing.

The importance of memo-writing, or memoing, e.g. in form of a research diary, is stressed by many grounded theorists as a central element of the research methodology, used to collate the results of the focused coding and elevating them to conceptual categories or themes (Charmaz, 2006, p. 91). For this study, a research diary was kept throughout the research process. The initial (open) coding was done on field notes, compiled in a computer-based, tree-structured, database. The codes emerging from these were then structured using mind-mapping software to identify potential themes. One dimension of the notes was a chronological structuring of incidents, in the early pre-research proposal stages mainly based on informal conversations with English teachers and administrators. Another dimension was the collating of information derived from the precursory literature review, organised by established constructs. These two streams of data were kept separate, and while it would be illusory to pretend that they could be kept apart neatly in the researcher’s mind, researcher reflectivity was employed as a device to help remain open to the codes emerging from the interactions with teachers.

Summarizing different GTM positions on the need for reflexivity, Mruck and Mey (2007, p. 518) stated that researchers need to explain their enquiry process, the interaction with the participants, and also need to acknowledge their prior or tacit knowledge, since all these factors affect the research process and analysis. In a variation of Charmaz's suggested sequence for student researchers, the development and application of the research instruments in this study did not occur in isolation, but was informed by the initial codes derived from preliminary conversations with teachers and the literature review. Likewise, the findings from the questionnaire pilot were used not only to improve the questionnaire itself, but also fed into the framework development for the semi-structured interviews. Similarly, during the fieldwork period, focused codes emerging from the interviews, responses to the open-ended questionnaire items, and informal discussions with teachers and administrators, were coded and then tested and developed further in subsequent interviews and conversations with other teachers. The research process was therefore not merely a short inductive phase of data collection and coding embedded in a deductive framework of literature review and research hypotheses, but an inductive process throughout. Figure 3 provides a chronological overview of how the established course structure of the MA programme, significant events related to English language policy, and the use of GTM were related and integrated in this study.

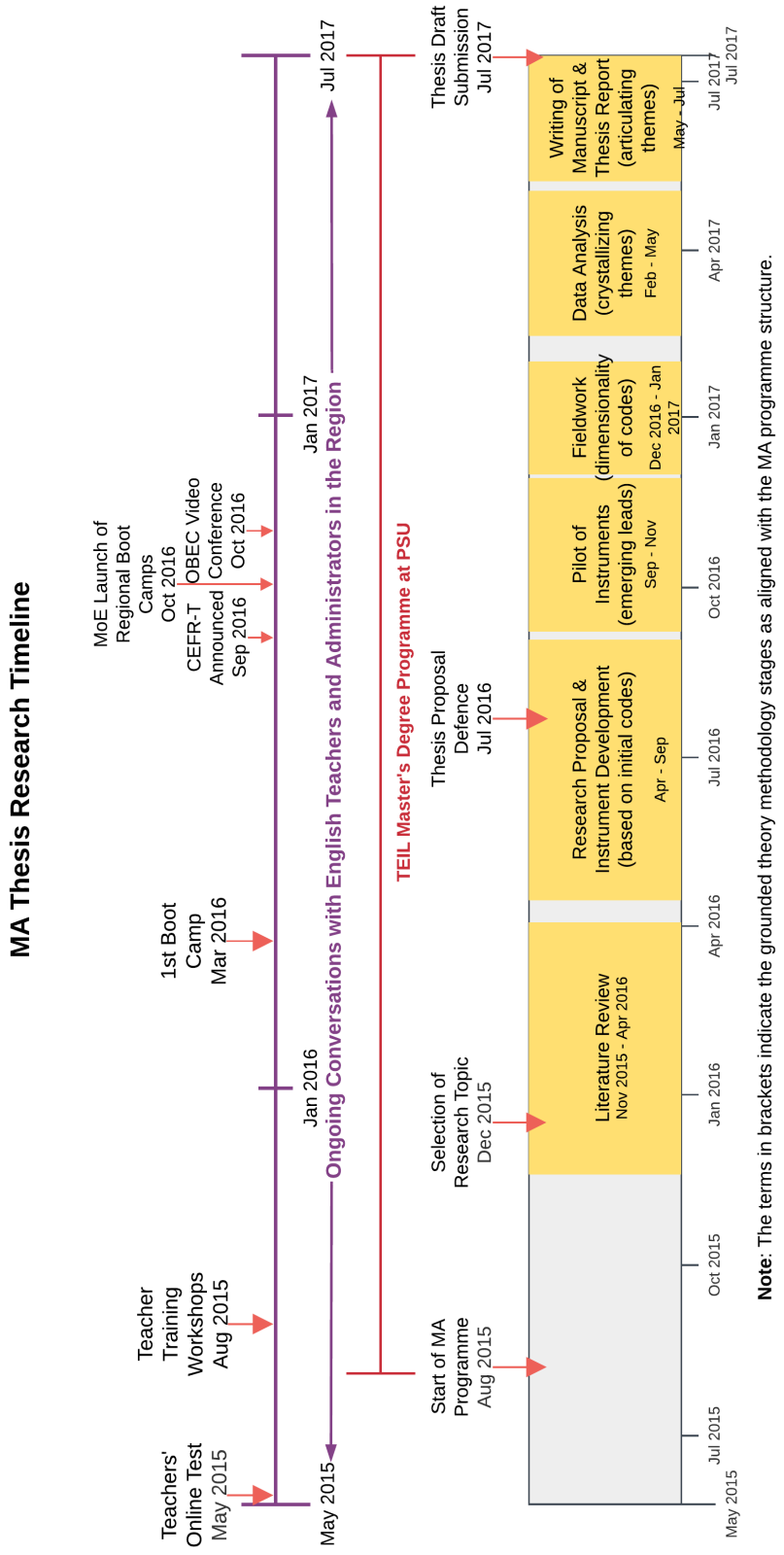

Figure 3. Timeline of MA thesis research and related events

5.2 Sample Population

Previous studies on English language curriculum change in Thailand had sampled their population in various ways: either a survey of one regional education administration (Thongsri, 2005) or interviews with a small number of individual teachers (Fitzpatrick, 2011; Nonthaisong, 2015). This survey set out to generate a representative sample across the following criteria:

- a representative mix of school sizes (from small to extra-large), which also determined the approximate number of English teachers at each school;
- schools under different regional educational administration offices (SEAs);
- schools in rural as well as in urban areas;[4]
- schools that were home to an English Resource and Instruction Centre (ERIC) as well as schools which were not.

These categories were not imposed by the study, but pre-existed in the administrative structure and the cognitive frame of teachers and administrators, and sampling across them was hoped to minimise bias in the design of the study. Details of the school size classification applied by OBEC are provided in Table 3. The English Resource and Instruction Centres (ERIC)[5] were established by OBEC to train and develop teachers (Kaur, Young, & Kirkpatrick, 2016, p. 350). They are attached to selected secondary state schools throughout the country, with an English teacher based at those schools taking on the role of ERIC manager, tasked by the ELI with organising training events for teachers and students of the schools associated with each ERIC centre (personal conversation with a retired ERIC manager).

The research area – four provinces under two Secondary Education Authorities (SEA) in the south of Thailand[6] – was chosen due to its proximity to Prince of Songkla

[4] The size of a school was also indicative of its location: large and extra-large schools were invariably located in the cities and considered ‘urban’, whereas small and medium size schools were considered ‘rural’ by teachers, even in cases where they were nominally located within the city district (*Amphoe Muang*).

[5] The acronym ERIC already contains the word “centre”, but Thai teachers and administrators usually referred to these centres as “ERIC centre” (*soon* ERIC) rather than “ERIC”, and this convention is followed here, despite the duplication.

[6] Each SEA covers two provinces on average.

University as well as its familiarity to the principal researcher who had conducted teacher training seminars in the region in 2015. As research participants were assured of their anonymity, the provinces are numbered here from 1 to 4 and the two SEAs labelled "A" and "B" rather than referred to by name.

It was explained to the researcher by administrators and teachers that the provincial location of a school does not play a role in terms of how it is being administered, as this is governed by a schools' SEA affiliation. However, the ERIC centres are organized on a provincial basis (on average, one urban/main and one rural ERIC centre for each province), and this was hypothesized to potentially have an impact on the level and quality of policy communication English teachers received.

The total number of state secondary schools in the research area was 72, and the total number of English language teachers of civil servant status was 323.[7] For the distribution of a questionnaire a 40% sample size was deemed desirable to generate a large enough sample which could reliably accommodate the abovementioned selection criteria for English language teachers: 129 teachers located at 28 schools.

Table 3. Schools and teachers in the sample population

School Size	Number of Schools	Number of Teachers
small (<500)	15	31
medium (<1500)	8	40
large (<2500)	4	45
extra-large (=> 2500)	1	13
total	**28**	**129**
Schools in SEA "A"	15	71
Schools in SEA "B"	13	58
ERIC Schools	3	34

[7] This number is based on data provided by the relevant SEAs, which was, however, not complete and up-to-date and was therefore complemented with figures provided by teachers in the field. A small number of contract teachers working at the sample schools as well as non-Thai English teachers (frequently referred to as "native speakers" by teachers and administrators) were not included in this study, because OBEC's focus in implementing the CEFR policy by assessing teachers' language proficiency and providing information and training for them was exclusively on English teachers of civil servant status.

The actual size of the sample population, based on the number of teachers at those 28 schools who completed the questionnaire forms, was 120 (a return rate of 93%). Of those teachers, 109 (91%) were female and 11 (9%) male. Their age ranged from 23 to 59, the average age being 45 years, and their average teaching experience was 20 years. 97% of the teachers had graduated as English majors, and 33% also held a master's degree (43% in English, 35% in educational administration).

It should be mentioned that none of the teachers involved in the pilot study or preliminary conversations with the researcher were part of the sample population. Based on practical and methodological considerations, a decision was also made not to seek clarification of policies and intentions from policymakers and administrators in Bangkok prior to the fieldwork phase, but rather to approach the phenomenon of education policy communication from a bottom-up perspective – the teachers' perspective – and the teachers surveyed did overall perceive themselves to be at the bottom of the curriculum change process, both hierarchically as well as geographically.

5.3 Research Instruments

5.3.1 Questionnaire

The items for the questionnaire were developed from informal conversations with English teachers, observations of teacher training events, policy statements, and previous research on English language curriculum change (Thongsri, 2005; Kulsiri, 2006; Fitzpatrick, 2011; Nonthaisong, 2015). The questionnaire was first drafted in English by the researcher, and then dialogically translated into Thai with the help of a native Thai English teacher who acted as research assistant. It was subsequently refined further by the thesis supervisor and an academic expert in survey design. Both the Thai and the English questionnaire forms can be found in Appendices A and B.

Apart from collecting demographic data about the teachers and their schools, the questionnaire consisted of four sections containing between five and eight items each:

- Part 1: About Yourself and Your School
- Part 2: Teaching English at Your School
- Part 3: The CEFR Online Test for Teachers
- Part 4: CEFR and its Implementation in Thailand
- Part 5: Education Policy and English Language Curriculum Changes

A six-point Likert scale was devised for these parts, avoiding a neutral mid-point due to concerns about the reliability of such scales particularly in Asian cultures, where researchers have observed a tendency toward non-commitment, i.e. opting for the neutral mid-point in a scale (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2011; Dörnyei & Taguchi, 2009).

strongly disagree	**disagree**	**somewhat disagree** // **somewhat agree**	**agree**	**strongly agree**

A pilot version of the questionnaire was, after having been checked for content validity by two members of faculty at PSU, administered during October 2016 to 40 English teachers in seven schools. The pilot survey was conducted in one province which was not part of the main survey, using the same purposive sampling technique as described above.

The pilot version of the questionnaire had still contained one compound item measuring respondents' knowledge of Thai government policy on the introduction of CEFR. The item presented four statements, and teachers were asked to choose which of these statements were part of the government policy:

Please tick the option(s) that according to your understanding adequately describe CEFR (more than one answer is possible):

- ☐ CEFR is used for assessment of English language proficiency
- ☐ In Thailand CEFR is only used to test teachers' English proficiency
- ☐ CEFR is used in combination with CLT to reform the English language curriculum
- ☐ CEFR will be used to assess the English language proficiency of Thai students too

18% (7/40) gave the correct answer (choices 1,3,4), but correct answers were clustered in two of the seven schools. A subsequent interview with a teacher at one of those schools revealed that one knowledgeable teacher had been asked to summarize the government's CEFR policy while her colleagues were completing the

questionnaire. The researcher also observed on other occasions that teachers completed the forms in groups, jogging each other's memories. It was therefore decided that testing for positive knowledge of government education policy in a 'researcher not present' scenario was not a valid option and should be left to the interview stage instead, since conferring amongst respondents and looking up information on the internet could not be ruled out.

Following the pilot and the realisation that CEFR policy had not really reached the classrooms, two further items were added to Part 5 of the questionnaire to measure the efficacy of different channels of communication for teachers, both in receiving policy information and support in implementation.

5.3.2 Interviews

Given the above-mentioned limitations of using a questionnaire to elicit knowledge and opinion on policy issues, the semi-structured interview format was chosen to explore teachers' understanding of and attitude to English language education policy as manifested in the introduction of CEFR. 12 teachers (10%) were chosen from the sample population, following the same purposive sampling criteria to reflect the four school sizes, rural and urban schools, and included one teacher who was also an ERIC manager. An overview of the teachers interviewed is provided in Table 4.[8] Many teachers were reluctant to be interviewed, and the role of audio-recording was not necessarily the (only) reason for such reluctance. Especially in the larger schools with more faculty, there was a tendency of one teacher being nominated for the interview by the head of the foreign languages department and/or other English teachers.

In an attempt to listen to the less confident teacher voices, the researcher also approached many of the less outspoken teachers with the request for an interview, but most of those teachers refused, saying that they did not have enough knowledge (about CEFR) and that the researcher had better interview someone else. Whether those teachers were genuinely lacking confidence or feeling that they did not have enough knowledge to be interviewed, or whether they had other reasons to refuse the request,

[8] As the participants in this study were assured of their anonymity, the teachers interviewed are in this report referred to by the letters A to L, and questionnaire respondents by a four-digit ID.

such as not wanting to reveal their opinions or just not being interested in talking to the researcher, cannot be ascertained here.

Table 4. List of teachers interviewed

	Age	Gender	School Size	Other Information
Teacher A	52	F	small	
Teacher B	35	M	medium	Head of foreign languages department
Teacher C	54	F	large	
Teacher D	49	F	large	Head of foreign languages department
Teacher E	44	F	small	
Teacher F	47	F	large	Head of foreign languages department
Teacher G	30	F	small	
Teacher H	37	F	medium	ERIC manager
Teacher I	30	F	medium	
Teacher J	51	F	medium	
Teacher K	54	F	medium	Head of foreign languages department
Teacher L	43	M	large	

The interviews took place at teachers' schools, and had originally been planned to be with individual teachers, but in two cases teachers preferred to be interviewed together with a colleague. They lasted 40 – 70 minutes each, and were conducted in either Thai, English, or a mix of both languages according to the preference of the respondents. The researcher chose not to be accompanied by a Thai research assistant/translator for these interviews in order to establish a more direct rapport with the respondents. The interviews were audio-recorded to allow for post-interview clarification of language questions with a research assistant, member-checking, as well as the transcription and coding for themes. Statements made in English are quoted in this report without any corrections to the language, statements made in Thai were translated by the researcher and checked for accuracy by a group of Thai English teachers.

As the interviews progressed, a small number of policy documents and materials produced by OBEC and the MoE were employed by the researcher as elicitation tools

to probe teachers' awareness of and attitudes to both the documents and the policies they referred to. The order of the questions was kept flexible to follow a more 'natural' flow of conversation and allow the respondents to articulate the themes relevant to them in the sequence which was plausible to them. An outline of the default sequence and key elements of the semi-structured interview is provided in Appendix D. Where respondents' statements seemed to contradict those made by other teachers, the researcher gently queried such statements but did not usually challenge them directly. When asked for his own opinion or the 'facts' about something, the researcher tried to defer such matters until after the interview in order not to make any statements which could be construed as being normative.

5.3.3 Document Analysis

In order to contextualise the data generated from the other two research instruments, policy statements and materials pertaining to the introduction of CEFR, published by the MoE or its subsidiaries OBEC and ELI, as well as public relations statements and news reports both in Thai and English language, were studied by the researcher as part of the grounded theory analysis. In addition, four documents which could be considered to exemplify the CEFR implementation process were used as elicitation tools in the interviews and informal discussions with teachers:

- *Handbook for learning and teaching English in a new way according to the CEFR* (English Language Institute, 2015)
- Ministry of Education announcement regarding the English language teaching reform policy (Ministry of Education, 2014)
- Press release on MoE cooperation with the Thailand Professional Qualification Institute (TPQI) to create English proficiency standard based on CEFR (Rohitsatien, 2016)[9] (Figure 4)
- Course book sample with reference to CEFR compatibility[10] (Figure 5)

[9] The slanted caption on the press release photo reads: "The CEFR standard will be adapted to the context of Thailand, and will be called CEFR-T."

[10] The title translates roughly as: "English learning and teaching packages, aligned to the CEFR standard and following the vision for the 21st century."

Figure 4. Press release announcing the development of CEFR-T

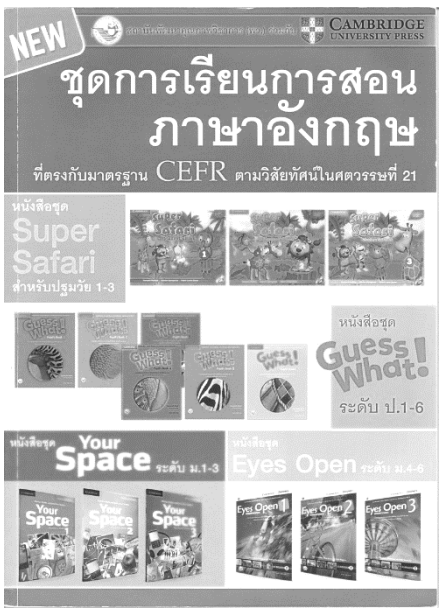

Figure 5. Course book sample with reference to CEFR

5.4 Ethical Conduct

To ensure compliance with research ethics, the principal researcher together with his thesis supervisor adapted consent forms and participant information sheets in Thai language from Mahidol University which were used to obtain informed consent from interview participants. Participants were informed of their rights and the purpose of the research, and provided with contact details for both the principal researcher and the faculty in case they wanted to complain or seek clarification on any matter.

Personal information was collected from questionnaire respondents on a separate sheet which was detached from the questionnaire form by the principal researcher upon receipt of the completed form, leaving only a numerical code to identify individual respondents. This procedure allowed the researcher to clarify issues with respondents when needed while ensuring their anonymity.

Official permission was also sought from and granted by the directors of all the schools visited, as well as the SEA offices in which the research took place, through letters issued by the Dean of the Liberal Arts Faculty at Prince of Songkla University.

5.5 Data Collection

The administration of the questionnaire and the interviews took place in December 2016 and January 2017. On average, each school was visited twice: once to deliver the questionnaire, and then a few days later to collect the forms and conduct interviews with some of the teachers. Of 129 questionnaire forms distributed, 120 were completed. Some items in a small number of forms had been left unanswered, and where contact information had been provided, participants were contacted to solicit the missing information. Where this was not possible, those particular items were omitted from the statistical data analysis. 49 out of the 120 respondents (41%) also provided additional comments in the open-ended items at the end of each part of the questionnaire, mostly to Part Three about their experience with the online placement test (39 respondents, or 32.5% of the sample).

5.5.1 Choice of Language

This research project was conducted by a bilingual speaker of English (and German) with an intermediate level of Thai language proficiency. It was part of a master's degree programme at a Thai university where English was the language of instruction. And it had English language teaching policy as its topic and Thai teachers of English as is subjects. The question might therefore be asked (and was indeed asked by observers) why the questionnaire research instrument was written in Thai, and why teachers were given the choice of whether they wanted the interview to be conducted in English, Thai, or a mix of both languages. The rationale for this approach was that for none of the research participants English was a native language, and that the majority would not only feel more comfortable speaking in Thai, but would also be able to express themselves more accurately and in more detail. There was also the added dimension that part of the research was about English language proficiency, and teachers might have felt that their language skills were being tested if the interviews had been conducted exclusively in English.

In the event, Thai language was the basis of most interviews and conversations, chosen implicitly and mutually once respondents were aware of the researchers' ability

to speak Thai. But there was a large amount of code-switching and translanguaging[11] taking place, with English vocabulary from EFL discourse, Thai policy terms, or examples of English classroom language frequently being interspersed. The researcher also took the opportunity to seek clarification where he did not understand a phrase or term in Thai, with explanations forthcoming in either Thai or English. This mix of both languages and the professional jargon being part of the data collection process came to be seen as an asset rather than a liability in the application of GTM, since the reflections on the translation process and the choice of language to express certain concepts aided the coding process, giving rise to what Glaser and Strauss had referred to as *in vivo* codes, specialized terms used by research participants: "*In vivo* codes help us to preserve participants' meanings of their views and actions in the coding itself" (Charmaz, 2006, p. 55, *emphasis in the original*).

To the author's knowledge, the issue of translation has not been very prominent in grounded theory discourse, where the term "translation" is used more often metaphorically to refer to transfers within a monolingual research setting than it is to refer to translation between languages. Bryant (2017, p. 181) does raise the issue of translation in an overview of GTM implementations by his Ph.D. students though, illustrating how key point or incident-by-incident coding may be more appropriate than word-by-word or line-by-line coding in research settings involving an additional layer of translation between languages.

6 Findings and Discussion

6.1 Statistical Analysis of the Questionnaire

In this section, the quantitative data from the questionnaire instrument are analysed statistically by subjecting them to internal consistency, factor, and correlation analysis. The results of the analysis presented here will then be combined, as applicable, with the qualitative data in the following sections, addressing each of the three research questions in turn.

[11] It is beyond the scope of this thesis to analyse where these interactions were located on the spectrum between code-switching and interlanguaging. For a discussion of the difference between these two constructs, see García and Wei (2014, p. 22)

6.1.1 Internal Consistency and Factor Analysis

As the questionnaire was designed to test teachers' views on issues related to CEFR, CLT, and the teaching of English at their schools, the focus was on covering a range of factors rather than testing few clearly defined constructs. It was therefore unsurprising that a Cronbach's Alpha test of internal consistency, both the entire questionnaire as well as the individual parts, returned rather low values (see Table 5)

Table 5. Cronbach's Alpha values

Scope	Cronbach's Alpha	Number of Items
All Parts	.691	27
Part 2	.245	7
Part 3	.564	6
Part 4	.605	5
Part 5	.582	8

The borderline reliability value of $\alpha = .691$ for the entire questionnaire needs to be considered in relation to the number of items, since Cortina (1993) has demonstrated that a higher number of items can produce not only higher alpha values, but also mask multi-dimensionality of constructs. Green and Yang (2015) argued that a Cronbach's test for internal consistency should be preceded by factor analysis of the survey items. An exploratory factor analysis of all Likert items suggested two factors which had an acceptable internal reliability when applying the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy (KMO) and the Cronbach's Alpha Test to them, as shown in Table 6.

Table 6. Reliability, mean, and SD of the Factors

Measure	Factor 1	Factor 2
KMO	.775	.762
Cronbach's Alpha	.802	.684
total variance explained	16%	11%
Mean	4.15	4.52
SD	0.72	0.80

Factor 1 comprises eight items and explains 16% of the total variance of all five Likert-based parts of the questionnaire. The mean for this factor is $\bar{x} = 4.15$ (SD = 0.72), locating it on the level of 'somewhat agree'. The details of the eight items contained in Factor 1 are presented in Figure 6 and Table 7.

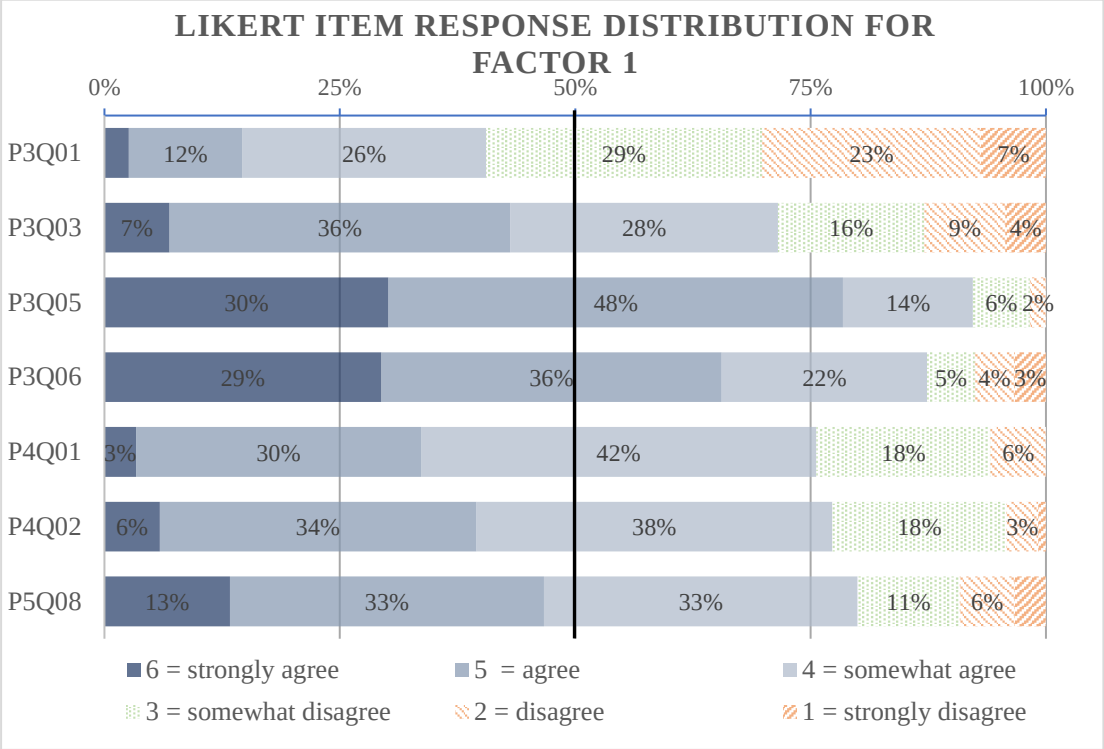

Figure 6. Response distribution for Likert items comprising Factor 1

Table 7. Wording, mean and SD values for Likert items comprising Factor 1

Item	Question	Mean	SD
Factor 1	**'CEFR Label'**	**4.15**	**0.72**
P3Q01	I was given sufficient time and information about the CEFR test to prepare for the online exam.	3.21	1.21
P3Q03	My CEFR score matches my own self-assessment of my English language proficiency.	4.04	1.24
P3Q05	Doing the CEFR online test has made me want to improve my English skills.	4.99	0.92
P3Q06	It is important that English teachers' language proficiency is assessed.	4.71	1.25
P4Q01	I have a good understanding of what the CEFR is.	4.07	0.93
P4Q02	The CEFR scale and descriptors are compatible with the current standards of the 2551 English language curriculum.	4.18	0.97
P4Q04	CEFR is an appropriate framework for teaching and assessing students' English skills at my school.	3.69	1.10
P5Q08	The adoption of CEFR by OBEC is a good way to improve the level of English language proficiency in Thailand.	4.28	1.20

Table 8. Labels and mean interpretation for Likert scales

	Likert Scale Range (Agreement)	Frequency Range (P5Q09 & P5Q10)	Mean Interpretation		
6	strongly agree	most	5.18	–	6.00
5	agree	a lot	4.34	–	5.17
4	somewhat agree	**moderately**	3.51	–	4.33
3	somewhat disagree	a little	2.68	–	3.50
2	disagree	least	1.84	–	2.67
1	strongly disagree	**never**	1.00	–	1.83

Factor 1, with its mean and SD values seen in isolation, could suggest that the implementation of CEFR in the secondary schools was taking place, since teachers expressed a moderate level of understanding and appreciation for the policy (Table 8 lists the Likert scale options and their mean value ranges).

However, such a conclusion was not supported by the qualitative data obtained through informal conversations and the interviews with the English teachers. A closer look at Factor 1 shows that its constituting items cover at least two themes: the first is the assessment of teachers' English proficiency through the CEFR online test (P3Q01, P3Q03, P3Q05 & P3Q06), the second is the policy of introducing CEFR to teaching English in Thai schools (P4Q02, P4Q04, P5Q08), and, arguably, a third theme is general understanding of what CEFR is (P4Q01). The first of these themes is rather distinct from the other two, though there is one common element to all three themes. Out of the total 27 Likert scale items in the questionnaire, 9 contain the acronym 'CEFR' (30%), but for Factor 1 this ratio rises to 7 out of 8 (88%). The only item which contained 'CEFR' in its wording but was not included in Factor 1 was item P4Q05, mentioning CEFR together with CLT. Therefore, this factor was named 'CEFR Label', since what it shows is that respondents were consistent in their replies to items which contained the acronym CEFR, even when the underlying themes were different.

The interviews revealed that the majority of teachers thought CEFR to be mainly or exclusively about the proficiency test levels, and those teachers who did have a better understanding of CEFR and/or the government's plans for implementing it and appreciated its potential, pointed to confounding factors in the education system which would make its implementation difficult. Therefore, two teachers with very different ideas of what CEFR was and how it was planned to be used in Thai schools, could nevertheless

provide the same answers in the questionnaire. As mentioned in the methodology section, this discrepancy between questionnaire responses and the data resulting from other sources points to the limitation of a researcher-not-present survey instrument when measuring factual knowledge. In addition, this analysis revealed some design flaws in the questionnaire itself (some constructs being ambivalent, allowing different interpretations dependent on the respondents' background). Therefore, Factor 1 was dismissed and not included in answering RQ1. Teachers' verbal feedback on the questionnaire, where it was given, revolved around two themes:

- that they liked the questionnaire because many items clearly addressed their problems, and that they hoped someone at the ministry would listen;
- that the questionnaire was difficult because they did not know how to answer the CEFR policy-related questions.

The second sentiment helps to explain why the items about CEFR policy turned out to be problematic, while the first helps to explain the high levels of agreement with many of the more general items about policy change, such as those that form part of the second factor.

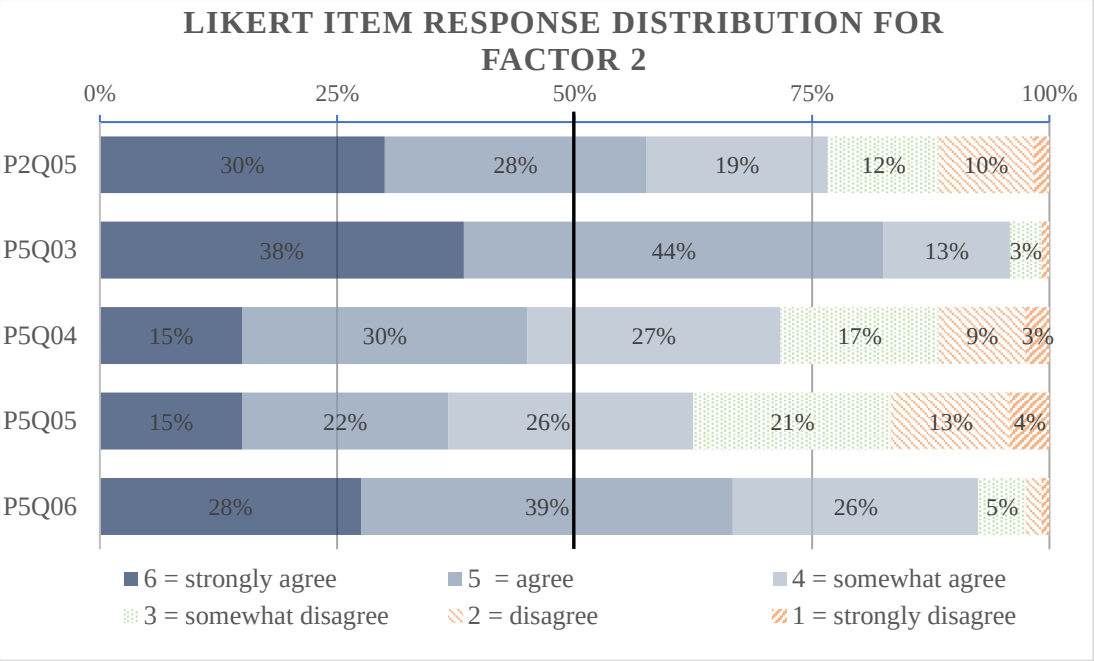

Figure 7. Response distribution for Likert items comprising Factor 2

Table 9. Wording, mean and SD values for Likert items comprising Factor 2

Item	Question	Mean	SD
Factor 2	**'Policy Change Fatigue'**	**4.52**	**0.80**
P2Q05	School duties not related to teaching English prevent me from preparing my lessons adequately.	4.51	1.38
P5Q03	Most policy changes do not address the real problems with teaching English at my school.	5.15	0.88
P5Q04	I often do not understand the changes in educational policy and have difficulty implementing the policies in my teaching.	4.18	1.28
P5Q05	I don't pay much attention to policy announcements because most of them will never be implemented anyway.	3.93	1.38
P5Q06	Teachers need to be involved more in the process of drafting new English language education policies.	4.83	1.00

Factor 2, explaining 11% of the total variance, combines five items related to education policy change. This factor was, based on the constructs tested in its constitutive items, labelled 'Policy Change Fatigue'. Its mean is $\bar{x} = 4.52$ (SD = 0.80), i.e. on average, the teachers surveyed agreed with most of the items.

In contrast with the items in Factor 1, the items constituting Factor 2 had been developed organically, reflecting statements made by teachers themselves in conversations. It is therefore not surprising that the responses of teachers to the questionnaire were found to be in congruence with the positions taken by the teachers interviewed subsequently. Factor 2 will therefore be used in answering RQ2.

A third, slightly weaker factor explaining 8% of the total variance ($\alpha = 0.599$), comprised three items relating to students' ability and opportunity to use English (P2Q02, P2Q06 & P2Q07). While this factor resonates with previous research on why attempts to implement CLT in schools have not been more successful, it has been omitted from this analysis since it does not directly address any of the three research questions.

6.1.2 Correlation Analysis

One of the aims in designing the questionnaire instrument had been to test whether teachers' understanding of and attitudes to the introduction of CEFR was statistically correlated to demographic factors such as teacher's age, CEFR test score, school size, and teachers' workload, with a view to answering RQ2. A correlation analysis was conducted using the *SPSS* software package (ver.22). Due to the majority of Likert item responses not being normally distributed, the non-parametric Spearman rank correlation coefficient (Spearman's rho) was examined. All correlations between demographic factors and Likert items which were flagged as statistically significant by the software package were of very weak or weak strength ($r_s < .40$), and Table 10 shows some of the items which had been hypothesised to have such correlations. But just as statistically significant correlation does not equate to a real, causal correlation, the absence of such statistical correlations does not entail an absence of causal relationships between factors in real life.

Table 10. Statistical (non-)correlations between questionnaire demographics and Likert responses

		P2 Q01	P2 Q07	P4 Q01	P4 Q02	P4 Q03	P4 Q04	P5 Q07	P5 Q08
Schoolsize	r_s	-.018	-.185*	.041	.024	-.009	-.044	.024	-.021
	Sig.	.848	.043	.659	.792	.920	.635	.799	.818
Province	r_s	-.048	-.016	.119	.063	-.126	.162	-.043	-.079
	Sig.	.613	.862	.197	.494	.173	.079	.640	.390
Teaching Workload	r_s	.031	.093	.126	.124	-.067	.151	.113	.147
	Sig.	.741	.314	.173	.177	.467	.102	.218	.109
CEFR Score	r_s	-.079	.041	.054	-.011	-.103	.047	.059	.050
	Sig.	.408	.660	.562	.909	.269	.615	.528	.590
Age	r_s	-.044	-.115	-.113	-.035	-.004	-.049	-.140	.006
	Sig.	.645	.214	.222	.704	.963	.598	.128	.952

Legend:

P2Q01	Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) is a suitable method for teaching English in my school.
P2Q07	My students do not have enough English skills to do Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) activities in class.
P4Q01	I have a good understanding of what the CEFR is.
P4Q02	The CEFR scale and descriptors are compatible with the current standards of the 2551 English language curriculum.
P4Q03	CEFR is more suitable for European countries because that is where it was developed.
P4Q04	CEFR is an appropriate framework for teaching and assessing students' English skills at my school.
P5Q07	My local ERIC centre supports me in implementing government education policy in my English language teaching.
P5Q08	The adoption of CEFR by OBEC is a good way to improve the level of English language proficiency in Thailand.

6.2 Findings

6.2.1 RQ1: 'What do state secondary school teachers understand CEFR to be, and what impact do they perceive it to have on them and their teaching?'

Research Question One was addressed in detail in Franz and Teo (2017), and therefore the main findings will be summarised and expanded upon here (the reader is at this point invited to see the manuscript submitted for publication, enclosed in Appendix E).

6.2.1.1 *CEFR is a test*

Teachers in the sample population firmly associated CEFR with proficiency tests, particularly the online placement test they were ordered to take in 2015. The announcement of that test had been the first time most teachers had come across the acronym CEFR. In that test (which was referenced by Minister Dapong quoted at the beginning of this thesis), 57% of the sample group had scored either A1 or A2 on the CEFR scale, and 43% B1 and above. A comparison of Figure 8 with Figure 2 (page 2) shows that the sample score distribution was in fact higher than the national average, but in both groups the majority of teachers had failed to achieve the pass level of B1/B2, and according to Table 2, listing the target levels for primary and secondary school students, their proficiency level was therefore below that expected of their students.[12] And yet, as the strongest response to any items

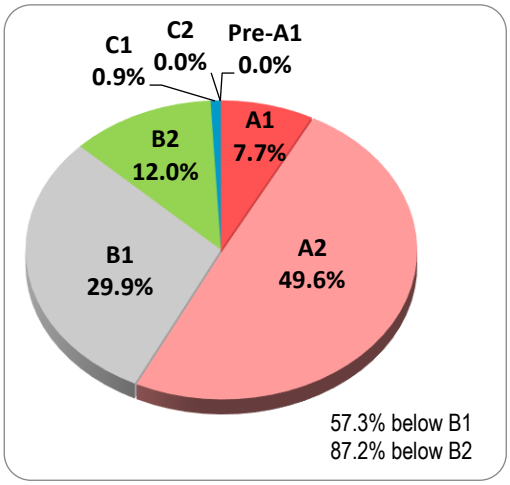

Figure 8. CEFR score distribution: research sample

[12] The pass level is quoted here as B1/B2. The minister mentioned B2 as the level considered acceptable for English teachers. However, the author could not find any mention of a required proficiency level for teachers in the policy documents. Only indirectly, by either assuming that teachers' proficiency level needs to be higher than that of their students (> B1) or deducting that university graduates are expected to achieve B2 and therefore teachers are too, does one arrive at B2 as being the required level for teachers. Locally, when attending the

in the questionnaire (P2Q08: mean = 5.74, SD= 0.54, median & mode = 6) shows, teachers strongly agreed that their level of proficiency needed to be higher than that of the students they taught.

The sobering results of that placement test, as well as problems encountered with the administration of the test, became firmly associated with the term CEFR. One example which shows such an equation of CEFR with the placement test for teachers is the following comment, given not in response to Part Three of the questionnaire about the online placement test, but to Part Four – "CEFR and its Implementation in Thailand":

> The CEFR test, if it were to be used with students, especially students in rural schools, would be rather difficult. Because of technical issues – the internet connectivity is not sufficient, and some exam questions, or passages, are too long for the students. (Questionnaire Response, Teacher ID 1205)

Another respondent echoed this view in her answer to Part Three, once again equating the placement test with the adoption of CEFR in general:

> The CEFR test, and especially its content, is not consistent with the learning environment and the curriculum in Thailand. (Questionnaire Response, Teacher ID 4003)

The teachers assumed that the Cambridge Placement Test which they had been subjected to, would also be the level and format which would apply to their students if/when 'CEFR' (i.e. the test) were introduced to Thai secondary schools. What that test in 2015 marked, though this was not made explicit in its announcement, was a transition from pencil and paper tests, which had been the format of previous tests for teachers and still was the format of the national O-NET exams for their students, to computer-based online testing.

> The CEFR test is a new form of exam, in that online technology needs to be used. Sometimes teachers themselves are not good at using computers. It makes them feel anxious about the test and using online technology. (Questionnaire Response, Teacher ID 1402)

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online tests in their provinces, teachers were told by the administrators that B1 was considered the pass level.

Many teachers had no prior experience with online tests, and technical problems, together with unclear or misleading instructions by the test administrators added further complications for the test-takers. At some test centres, the teachers had been told that the adaptive test was indeed a speed test, and that the progress bar on their screens was an indicator of the time remaining for the test, so the further they progressed, the more rushed they felt about time running out.

English teachers also had the strong feeling that they were the only ones singled out for repeated assessment of their language proficiency by the MoE, with in-service teachers of other subjects not being tested at all, as this interview with teachers I, J, and K (K was the Head of Foreign Languages), who had scored B1 (Teachers J & K) and B2 (Teacher I) respectively and worked at a medium size school in Province 4, shows:[13]

Interviewer: Do you think it [the placement test] was a good way of evaluating the teachers' knowledge ...-

Teacher J: No, I don't think so ... [laughs]

Teacher K: not a good way [laughs]

Teacher J: ==why, why English teacher always .. have a test? […]

Teacher J: Only English teachers-

Teacher I: Only English teacher-

Teacher J: ==have a lot of test-

Teacher I: ==in Thailand [laughs]

Teacher J: But another subject, why not? ....

Teacher K: Maybe the government want to develop English teacher.. because English subject is the big problem of, of Thailand.

Teacher J: ==Yes, we have a lot of test, but the students' knowledge is lower [laughs] lower, lower.

Teacher K: ==lower.

Teacher J: But why?

---

[13] The transcription system follows Gumperz and Berenz (1993):

.. = pause up to 0.5 seconds

… = pause between 0.5 and 1 second

…. = pause longer than one second

- = truncated speech

== = latching

Teacher K: ==O-NET O-NET ..
Teacher J: 25..
Teacher K: Scores for English are the lowest, right? the lowest in the country.
Teacher I: Mmm. ....
Teacher J: Then they have to go and evaluate the teachers.

While teachers took issue with the frequency and the way in which they were being assessed, they did not question the content validity of the placement test itself, nor the extent to which the skills which had been tested were an accurate reflection of the skills they needed as teachers of English in their schools. One teacher, who was teaching at a very large school and had scored B1, broke the mould though:

> I communicate with foreigners [NS] every day. I can speak, I can write. But the placement test measured knowledge under time pressure, it wasn't really about teaching. Passing that test doesn't make one a good teacher.
>
> (Questionnaire Response, Teacher ID 4310)

A minority voice in this sample population, she nevertheless highlighted a silence which exists in Thailand's English proficiency discourse, and which will be returned to in the discussion. Overall, only 30% of questionnaire respondents stated that their score had not been an adequate reflection of their English proficiency self-assessment (P3Q03 reversed), and 34% thought that their score would have been significantly better if it had not been for problems with the administration of the test (P3Q04).[14] Items P3Q05 and P3Q06 on teacher proficiency assessment, which had been one of the sub-themes in the factor analysis, show that there was also widespread agreement that English teachers needed to improve their language proficiency.

[14] Returning briefly to the question of statistical correlations: one might expect there to be a significant negative correlation between items P3Q03 and P3Q04, i.e. someone thinking that their score did not reflect their self-assessment would then also say that problems with the test were to blame for their performance, and vice versa. But a Spearman's rho analysis does not bear this out. There is a significant negative correlation between these two items, but at (r_s = -.224, n = 116, p < .001 (1-tailed)), it is weak. This adds to the perception of teachers being highly individual in their attitudes and circumstances, a point pursued in answering RQ2 below.

6.2.1.2 *CEFR is more suitable for European learners*

There was considerable confusion amongst teachers over what the acronym CEFR actually stood for ('Cambridge' or 'communication', 'English'), which emphasised the perception that it was a European development (which it was), aimed at assessing English language learners in Europe (which it was not). 83% of questionnaire respondents agreed with the sentiment that CEFR was more suitable for European countries than for Thailand (P4Q03), a theme which these two comments illustrate:

> The people who develop the CEFR test should have criteria to classify candidates according to whether they are native speakers, or whether they are learning English as a second language / foreign language. (Questionnaire Response, Teacher ID 1604)

> CEFR test results for Europeans who know English already and for Thai children who have little knowledge of the language are not comparable. The foundation of Thai students and Europeans is different. The framework cannot be used to teach and then assess that Thai students aren't clever.
> (Questionnaire Response, Teacher ID 4310)

In conversations and interviews, teachers elaborated this view by pointing out that English in Thailand was a foreign rather than a second language, and that in Thailand, particularly in the rural, non-touristic areas, there was less opportunity for students and teachers to come into contact with foreigners and practice English in daily life.

None of the teachers at the time of the interviews were aware of government plans to develop a local, Thai adaptation of the framework, entitled CEFR-T(h). When shown the press release about this cooperation between the MoE and the TPQI to develop an English Language Proficiency Test for Communication, which would be used both in the assessment of Thai students and teachers, as well as foreign teachers, and would be based on a 10-point scale rather than the original six levels of the CEFR, teachers generally welcomed the idea, hoping it would be more appropriate for Thai learners.

6.2.1.3 *CEFR scores determine teachers' development opportunities*

The results of the online placement test in 2015 had a more lasting effect on teachers' reputation and development prospects. OBEC had used the results to structure its professional development program for in-service English language teachers and to

decide who was eligible for which kinds of training. At the time of the test, teachers were told by SEA administrators and ERIC managers that those who had 'failed' the test (i.e. received a score of A1 or A2) would be ordered to attend a five-day English training workshop organised by the local SEA's. That workshop was portrayed as a punishment for teachers rather than an opportunity for them to improve their language skills, and this reflects the dialectic of training events being regarded by teachers both as an opportunity and as an inconvenience. Framing that workshop as a punishment also furthered the sense of embarrassment many teachers felt about their scores. Teacher F, head of the foreign languages department at an urban school, who had scored A2, talking about the long list of tests which had preceded the online test:

> […] because we are afraid of .. we are worried about the test, especially. You see, everyone have level. Maybe they are 'Oh, this teacher is higher than that one.' For example, I got A2. We went to the training workshop […] we went like secretly, no picture [laughs]. For me, I was ok, maybe practice myself about speaking skill, listening .. . (Interview with Teacher F)

Subsequent training opportunities were on a voluntary basis though, and made available only to the higher performers in the online test. In early 2016, teachers with a score of B1 or higher were offered the opportunity to study a 30-hour online module provided by Cambridge English. In March-April 2016, a six-week so-called 'Boot Camp' run by British Council trainers was offered for teachers who had scored B2 or higher and were under the age of 40. This training model was then extended by the ministry with the launch of the first four Regional English Training Centres in October 2016,[15] though again, only teachers with an online test score of B1 or higher could initially apply. Crucially, it was not communicated to the majority of English teachers, who had received scores of A2 or lower, whether and how they would be given a chance to attend intensive training courses with native speakers.

[15] This was one of the Education Ministry's flagship policies, which was launched by the minister at the press conference referenced in the Introduction, when he called it the most serious teacher education program in Thailand's history.

6.2.1.4 *Summary of Findings for RQ1*

To teachers in the sample group, CEFR was first and foremost a test. What became apparent in the interviews and school visits was that CEFR had not found its way into the schools' English language curricula yet. After the online placement test of teachers in 2015, from the teachers' point of view, there had been no further developments with regard to implementing CEFR in classroom teaching or in the national exams. There was widespread but not universal awareness of the framework's six levels, not least due to teachers themselves having been labelled, but much less awareness of the can-do descriptors associated with these levels. Partly due to the first encounter with CEFR through the Cambridge online placement test, it was considered as something foreign, (too) difficult for the Thai students, and more suitable for European learners of English as a second language.

Also, the online test had contained a listening component, which marked a change from the previous tests for teachers which had been pencil-and-paper-based and had used only reading and controlled writing to assess the teachers. This inclusion of listening to some teachers indicated the emphasis of CEFR on testing communicative language skills. Teachers who had a better understanding of CEFR and the MoE's plans for introducing it in combination with CLT, nevertheless saw obstacles to its application in Thai secondary schools, and these will be presented in the findings on RQ2.

6.2.2 RQ2: 'What are the factors that influence teachers' attitudes to and degrees of support for the introduction of CEFR?'

In answering this research question, and throughout the research project, CEFR is treated as a referent, as what it signifies to the teachers in the sample population rather than merely the 'actual' policy as it was articulated in the MoE policy documents. The policy of introducing CEFR did not stand in isolation. It was preceded (and its initial launch succeeded) by many other policy announcements, and introduced through the channels familiar to the teachers which will be described in the section on RQ3 below. Therefore, it was also perceived in a similar vein to other education policies. To the extent to which teachers mentioned factors in response to questions about the suitability of CEFR for their teaching practice, the major factors which were mentioned most frequently are presented here, even if they do not refer directly to the CEFR.

6.2.2.5 *Policy Change Fatigue*

> Education policy should not change too often. If you intend to use CEFR with Thai students [orig: 'children'] and teachers, it should be done in a continuous way. Annual evaluation should measure progress or find ways to develop it further.
>
> (Questionnaire Response, Teacher ID 4307)

The one theme which connected almost all comments to the questionnaire and was a constant theme in interviews and conversations was the wish for continuity. Teachers wanted an education policy to stay on the statute books for long enough so they could implement it and evaluate its merits or otherwise. But their experience was that this never happened. There was also a level of cynicism regarding education policy changes such as the introduction of CEFR, cynicism based on teachers' past experiences. In a comment to an open-ended questionnaire item, one teacher put it as follows:

> The changes in educational policy do not solve the problem of teaching. The people who make the policies are not the same people who use the policies. Those who make the policies are not aware or do not understand the real problems. They think 'this policy is good,' 'that policy is good.' They go on study trips abroad. 'Another country is already doing something, they have good education, so let's apply that in our country.' They think it will make our education [system] as good as theirs. But they don't look at the context, the conditions in our country.
>
> (Questionnaire Response, Teacher ID 1201)

This view was shared by many other teachers, feeling that they were very much at the receiving end of education policy-making, not consulted in the drafting of policies, but left to pick up the pieces of half-baked policies and having to meet targets with insufficient resources:

> Education policy has been changing very frequently over the last 20 years. But that has had no [positive] effect on the Thai educational system at all. This does not mean that there has been no change. But the setting of targets for education has lacked direction. The old one [=minister] builds it, the new one tears it down. It's like there is no forward vision, no single target. For English language, the policy and the practitioners have to go in the same direction.
>
> (Questionnaire Response, Teacher ID 2202)

The second factor resulting from the factor analysis in Section 6.1.1, labelled 'Policy Change Fatigue' and detailed in Figure 7 and Table 9 on p.38, showed that the teachers overall 'agreed' ($\bar{x}$ = 4.52, SD = 0.80) with the constitutive statements, despite their strong wording. That factor combined the themes of policy changes not addressing the real problems in schools (P5Q03), teachers often having difficulty to understand and implement the policies (P5Q04), and, to a lesser extent, not paying attention to policy announcements because most would not be implemented anyway (P5Q05).

6.2.2.6 *Teachers Being Kept From Teaching*

> I have to take care of a lot of junk documents and other unrelated tasks; processing pretentious paperwork is the main job, teaching a secondary task. (Questionnaire Response, Teacher ID 4310)

That is how one teacher expressed her frustration rather graphically. Item P2Q05, "School duties not related to teaching English prevent me from preparing my lessons adequately," contained in the 'Policy Change Fatigue' factor, spoke to that sentiment, and its mode was 6, i.e. the most frequent response was 'strongly agree'. When visiting the schools, especially small and medium schools, the researcher could observe English teachers running bank errands, providing first aid to students, or preparing mock exams for the entire school when they did not have to teach a class. Some teachers had arranged themselves with that situation, a point that will be returned to when discussing teacher professionalism below. But many teachers were not happy with their extracurricular workload, as one respondent expressed his wish succinctly:

> Teachers' duties should be only teaching.
> (Questionnaire Response, Teacher ID 1710)

6.2.2.7 *O-NET exam*

Some teachers had a very clear vision of how CEFR would be a better assessment framework than the current O-NET standardized exam, and the appropriateness of using CLT for getting their students to use English with confidence. And this knowledge was not necessarily concentrated in big urban schools and ERIC centres either. Teacher A, working in a small, rural school as the only full-time English teacher, said:

> I would very much like to use CEFR [in my teaching], because it is useful and not very difficult. But what we encounter is O-NET/Admission. […] The ministry wants us to use communicative language teaching, but they also want the children to pass the admission exam. With only two lessons per week I don't know how I can do that. (Interview with Teacher A)

One dissenting voice in support of the O-NET English exam was a comment in response to Part Four of the questionnaire, about the implementation of CEFR, suggesting that a new assessment mapped to the CEFR scale was not needed:

> The O-NET exam is already an assessment in which the indicators meet the [2008] curriculum specification.
> (Questionnaire Response, Teacher ID 4105)

Generally, though, the format and content of the annual O-NET English exams for Years 9 and 12 (*Mathayom* 3 and 6) was seen as one major stumbling block to teaching communicative language skills as prescribed by the curriculum. Many schools actually suspended their regular teaching according to the 2008 curriculum for Year 12 in the term preceding the O-NET to allow students to cram and be tutored for the exam.

6.2.2.8 *English level of students entering secondary school is way below the expected standard*

One confounding factor mentioned particularly by teachers of the lower secondary levels (*Mathayom* 1 to 3, i.e. Years 7 to 9) was students' very low level of English proficiency. Teachers, especially at rural schools, reported that many of the students entering secondary school could not even read and write in English, and therefore (even) the current 2008 curriculum standards and indicators for those years were completely unachievable because teachers had to start teaching those students from zero again, i.e. the A, B, C. Teacher K, talking about O-NET scores for Year 6 (*Prathom* 6) primary school students on average being higher than the scores for Year 9 (*Mathayom* 3):

> […] some students cannot. Maybe some student, top of O-NET, they cannot read, they cannot write. Last year I interviewed Year 6, they got '4' [top score] in English, but they cannot read, they cannot write. (Interview with Teacher K)

6.2.2.9 *Teacher Individuality in Reacting to Policy Change*

As shown in Section 0 above, demographic factors which had been hypothesised to be potential predictive factors for teachers' attitudes proved not to be, at least not in terms of statistical significance. School size, age, or CEFR level of teachers did not produce statistically significant correlations to the Likert items in the questionnaire. What, therefore, did the qualitative data arising from the school visits and interviews suggest as factors in determining teachers' attitudes to policy change in the form of CEFR?

Age is not an issue

The classification of teachers by their age was one trope which was apparent in MoE policies (e.g. limiting the age of participants in the initial Boot Camp in March 2016 to those aged 40 or under, or for scholarships for study trips abroad), and also comments made by teachers themselves.

> Online exams are not suitable for some people over the age of 50 because their eyesight is poor.
>
> (Questionnaire Response, Teacher ID 4001)

That was the comment of one teacher about the online placement test, expressing a theme which was echoed by many other teachers, not only those who were over 50 years of age, but mainly by younger ones, that older teachers were not familiar or comfortable with using computers, either in taking the proficiency test or in teaching.

This extract from the interview with Teacher F (in her mid-forties) revolves around the issue of when teachers stop to adapt:

> Teacher F: I think old teachers they don't change. They think, "oh, I'm going to retire soon, retire 'early'."
>
> Interviewer: So what age do you think teachers stop==
>
> Teacher F: ==stop? 55 up, *na*. 50 is still ok. [laughs]

However, some of the most engaged and active teachers encountered by the researcher during the data collection period were teachers aged 50 and above. Some were using Line™ to communicate with, give assignments to, and assess their students, others organised summer camps for their students.

Personal networks are more important than school size or location

Teacher A, quoted above, is an example of an English teacher with a good understanding of the MoE's policy on CEFR and CLT. She was working as the only full-time English teacher at a small, rural school, about 40km away from the capital of Province 3. She had moved there from another school to be closer to her home town. For information about policy developments she relied on her local ERIC centre, and more crucially, Facebook™. She was part of a Facebook™ group of English teachers who had met at a workshop, and one of her friends had been involved in producing the ELI *Handbook for learning and teaching English in a new way according to the CEFR* (English Language Institute, 2015).

The situation of Teacher G was similar. She too had moved from another school, in her case a large school with a functioning ERIC centre in a neighbouring province, to a small, rural school to be closer to her parents' home. And she brought with her the experience and social network from that previous workplace.

Conversely, and this is based on teachers' gossip, but consistent gossip about several schools, there were rifts within English departments at some of the larger schools, where factions within the department were not communicating with each other, and information was not shared amongst all staff. Therefore, it was very much the personal networks and initiatives of individual teachers, rather than any demographic factor, which determined teachers' access to policy information and subsequently their understanding of it.

6.2.2.10 *Summary of Findings for RQ2*

The issues teachers raised as confounding factors for the introduction of CEFR were mostly general issues not specific to this policy, but applicable to any attempt at changing and improving the standard of English teaching and learning. There was a strong sentiment that the policy changes only ever imposed superficial changes but did not address the underlying problems, thereby not improving the conditions for teaching English, but instead worsening the situation by adding to the bureaucratic workload of teachers having to deal with these superficial changes in addition to all the other tasks unrelated to teaching their subject, English language.

Contrary to what the 'Policy Change Fatigue' factor might suggest, many teachers were not categorically opposed to change:

> Educational policy changes can take place – if they increase the effectivity of the education system. But it is vital that there is a guiding policy in place to allow the objectives to be realised.
> (Questionnaire Response, Teacher ID 1604)

And as one sub-theme of the factor indicated, they wanted to be more involved in the drafting of English language policies (P5Q06) – 93% of respondents agreed with this statement to some degree.

6.2.3 RQ3: 'What is the relative efficacy of channels and mechanisms used in communicating English language teaching policy?'

When the pilot study results showed that the policy of making CEFR the basis of all English language teaching had not yet had any impact on school teachers' classroom practices, the third research question was updated to analyse more closely the ways in which policy change was actually being communicated to teachers. The purpose was to find out which means and channels were used by the policymakers at the MoE and its subsidiaries to communicate their policies with regard to English language teaching, and what the relative effectivity of these channels was.

6.2.3.1 *Using Video Conferences to Reach English Teachers Directly*

The video of Minister Dapong's speech quoted at the beginning of this thesis was replayed at a nationwide all-day video conference for English teachers in October 2016. All English teachers had been ordered via their regional SEA offices to attend the video relay at a school in their SEA area, in some cases involving a 100km car journey to the venue. The announcement letter from the local SEA to the school directors was sent out only two days before the event. Consequently, many of the teachers in the sample group did not go because they had previous commitments or lack of transport. But of the teachers who did attend the video conference screenings, many did remember the celebrities who took part in the launch of teaching apps, but none recalled any policy announcements having been made. Both SEAs surveyed had also encountered technical difficulties – in one school there had been sound problems, in the other school there were problems with internet connectivity on the day.

This event is mentioned here because it was presented by the MoE as an innovative way to communicate more directly with teachers, and to cut travel costs (from the provinces to Bangkok). It used modern communication technology to present English learning apps for mobile devices and computers, though in the minds of many teachers, it was an event which promoted the products of the companies involved, as this teacher said in response to the question whether CEFR had been mentioned:

> We were ordered to attend. […] From morning to afternoon, mostly it was advertising; organised together with OBEC; and they invited celebrities like Christopher Wright to join, he presented his app, which they did together [with OBEC]. In the afternoon they had Echo Hybrid from The Nation, but CEFR? No.
>
> (Interview with Teacher F)

Viewing the recorded sessions of the video conference on YouTube (OBEC TV, 2016), one can see that in fact all the major components of the MoE's 2014 policy on introducing CEFR, and its combination with CLT, were covered in the first 20 minutes of the event. Therefore, judging by the reactions of teachers in the sample group, this pilot project had failed to reach them. The next section moves on to more traditional and established forms of policy communication.

6.2.3.2 *Production and Dissemination of Information about CEFR*

The ELI had in 2015 produced a 200-page *Handbook for learning and teaching English in a new way according to the CEFR* (English Language Institute, 2015), a hard copy of which should have been sent to every state secondary school. However, upon visiting the schools at the end of 2016 / beginning of 2017 and showing a copy of the handbook to teachers, the most frequent reply was that they had never seen the book before. At some schools, the teachers did recognize the handbook and acknowledged that they had received it, but had not actively engaged with it and filed it amongst other teaching resources instead.

That year, ELI had also dedicated its annual training seminar for ERIC managers on 16 – 19 March 2015 to the topic of CEFR under the title 'Towards Better Student Outcomes: Professional Development, CEFR, CLT.'

It is evident that the ELI was putting some effort into spreading information about the new policy of reforming English language learning and teaching around

CEFR and CLT. The flow of information was based on the idea of cascading: The ELI in Bangkok would produce the materials and organise workshops for the multipliers (either ERIC managers or SEA English language supervisors). Visiting the schools sampled for this research project, a very uneven picture emerged of how well (or whether) this model of cascading was working in practice.

6.2.3.3 *Relevance of ERIC Centres*

As the findings on RQ2 have shown, school size was not a predictor of the efficacy of policy communication. However, analysing the questionnaire responses regarding sources of curriculum policy information and support for English teachers, school location, i.e. which province a school was located in, did play a prominent role. Looking at the boxplot for item P5Q09h in Figure 9, the summary data for all four provinces

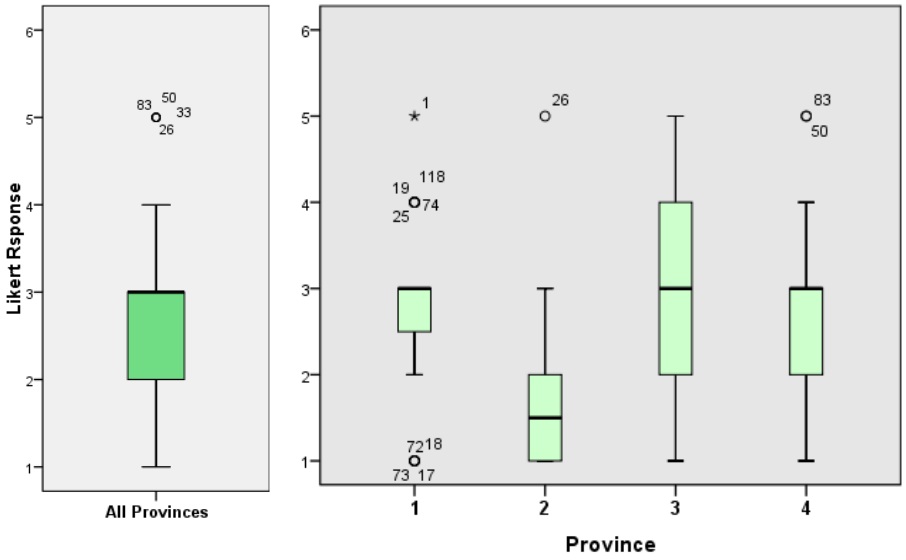

Figure 9. Boxplots for Item P5Q09h – Policy information from local ERIC centre

suggests a little to moderate amount of education policy information to reach the teachers from their local ERIC centre. Analysing the data by province, however, reveals a more nuanced and dramatic picture: more than half of the teachers in that province say that they never receive such information from their ERIC centre. As one teacher from a large school in Province 2 commented on Part Five of questionnaire:

> The ERIC centre does not play any role at all.
> (Questionnaire Response, Teacher ID 1704)

Province 2 was also the province which had shown the highest level of dissatisfaction with the online placement test as shown in Paper One below (see p.103). Conversely, teachers in Province 3 were the most content with the preparations and administration of the online placement test. And as shown here, they were also the teachers who reported the highest flow of policy information from their ERIC centre. The picture emerging from the questionnaire data corresponds with the narratives of teachers and observations made in schools by the researcher.

The ERIC managers themselves also had quite divergent ideas of what their role was, in particular whether they were simply expected to organise and execute training activities for (key) teachers[16] in their region whenever they received a budget and instructions from the ELI, or whether they should actively launch their own initiatives, seeking funding from their schools or other sources. The discrepancy in CEFR awareness and preparedness for the online placement test are an example of this: the main ERIC manager in Province 3 had organised a one-day seminar on CEFR shortly after the policy was launched in 2014 and nine months before the teachers were tested, whereas teachers in Province 2 learnt about their being summoned to attend the online placement test via a letter from their SEA only two weeks before the test.

To answer Research Question 3 with regard to the ERIC centres, it can be said that, where it works as intended, it does work well in communicating policy initiatives to the teachers in that catchment area. But the problem is that, at least in the sample area, a well-working ERIC centre that reached teachers in surrounding schools was the exception, not the norm.

[16] The cascading of training and knowledge did not end with the ERIC centres. Most centres could not cater to all the English teachers in their catchment area, and so it was typically the heads of foreign languages who were invited to attend the training events at ERIC centres, with an expectation that they would then pass on what they had learnt to other colleagues at their schools. Whether that happened seemed to be a matter of teacher personalities and school dynamics.

6.2.3.4 *Relative Significance of Sources for Policy Information and Support*

Two items in the questionnaire instrument asked teachers to rate the relative significance of channels and institutions in receiving information about education policy change (P5Q09), and in receiving support with issues related to the implementation of the English language curriculum (P5Q10). A six-point Likert scale was also used for these two items, but it should be noted that this scale was negatively skewed: in contrast to other items in the questionnaire measuring respondents' agreement with the statements, it measures frequency and does have a midpoint at 4 = ' moderately', and the inclusion of the lowest level, 1 = 'never', makes the scale asymmetric.[17]

6 = most	5 = a lot	4 = moderately	3 = a little	2 = least //	1 = never

For information about education policy changes (Figure 10), the teachers ranked internet sources the highest, followed by their school director and head of foreign languages.

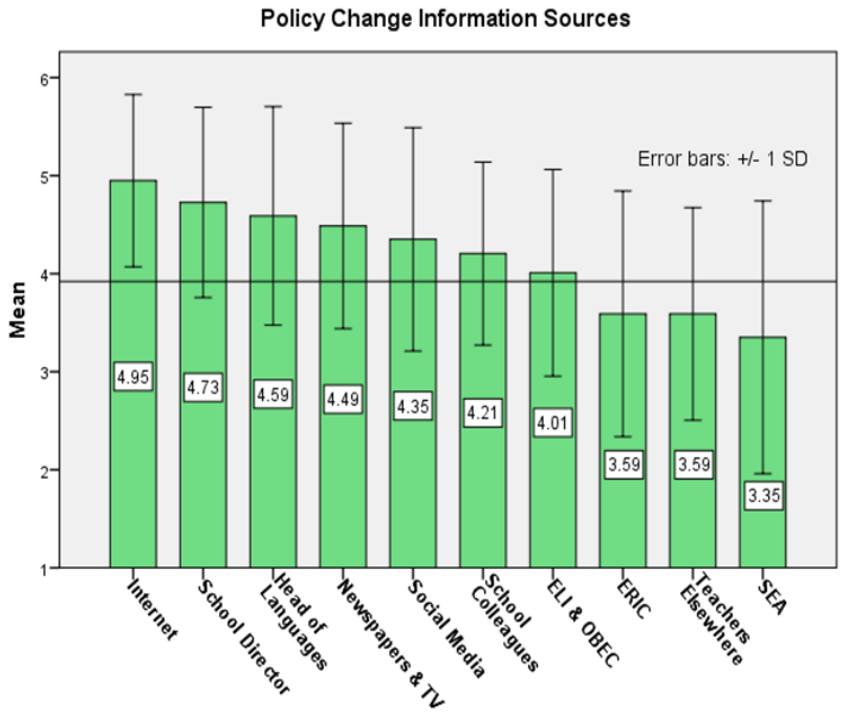

Figure 10. Mean ranking for sources of policy change information (P5Q09)

[17] The interpretation of means for this scale can be found in Table 8 on page 36.

That the latter two roles were ranked 2nd and 3rd corresponds with the official, bureaucratic, model of communication, wherein correspondence from the MoE via its subsidiaries is addressed to the school directors, who then disseminate the information further to heads of departments or the teachers directly. What is more remarkable is that informal sources of information, such as the internet, traditional media like newspapers and TV, as well as social media, rank consistently higher than the official government agencies such as OBEC/ELI, ERIC, and their SEA English language supervisor.

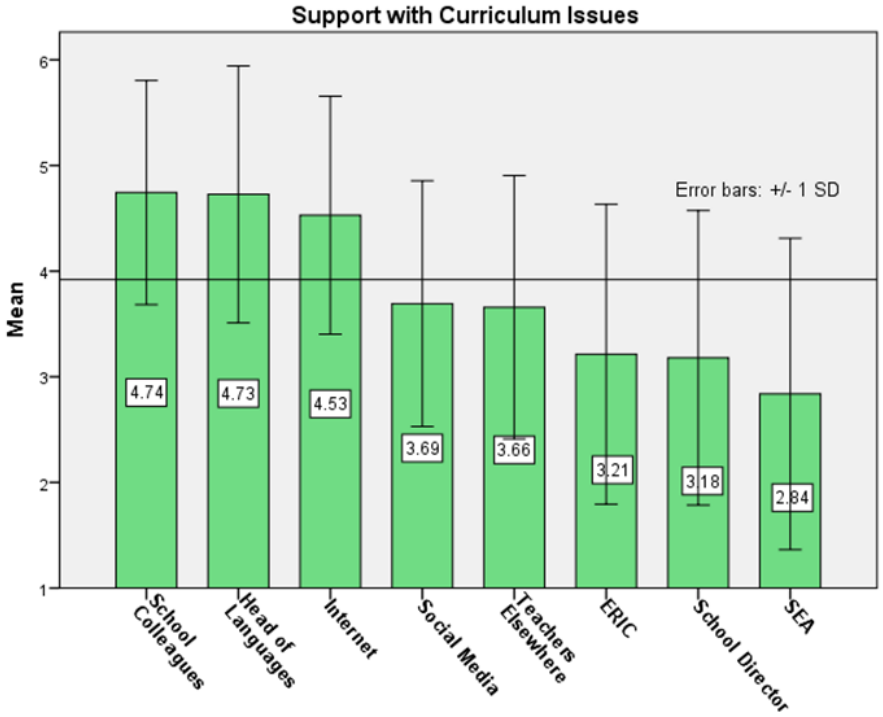

Figure 11. Mean ranking for sources of support with questions regarding English language curriculum (P5Q10)

That picture is repeated when turning to the ranking of sources of support with questions regarding the implementation of the curriculum (Figure 11). Again, apart from their head of department, English teachers turn to informal sources such as colleagues and social media rather than the official support channels such as ERIC centres and the English language supervisor at their SEA.

6.2.3.5 *The Role of Educational Publishers*

One factor which emerged during the research project, and which had not been included in the questionnaire instrument, was the importance of course book publishers in the dissemination of policy information and provision of practical training for English teachers. In conversations with teachers, when talking about where they had received information about the meaning of CEFR from, promotional seminars and workshops organised by educational publishing companies were repeatedly mentioned. Teacher J, for example, had in December 2016 attended a seminar for secondary school teachers covering the five core subjects (including English), jointly organised by a publishing company and a local university. The main topic was the Backward Design method of curriculum planning, but the speaker covering the subject of English also linked it to the current MoE policy regarding CEFR. He introduced and strongly recommended the *Handbook for learning and teaching English in a new way according to the CEFR* (English Language Institute, 2015) to his audience, providing the URL for teachers to download. Teacher J downloaded the electronic copy of the handbook, thought it to be useful, and printed hard copies for herself and her school colleagues. None of the teachers at that school had been exposed to the handbook through the official distribution channel via their SEA office the previous year. The researcher, in October 2016, also had the opportunity to join teachers in attending such a publishers' workshop on teaching English in the 21st century. CEFR had been listed as a topic on that workshop's schedule, though it was more prominent in the publisher's promotional material (see Figure 5) than in the speakers' presentations.

These one to two-day workshops all followed a similar pattern: The title would articulate a current government policy, such as CEFR, Backward Design, 21st century learning/skills/teaching, or Thailand 4.0, prominent English native speakers with TV appearances or academics be the guest presenters, and the program would be a mix of academic presentations on a policy or teaching method, practical activities applying those methods, and presentations on topics such as O-NET tutoring, all tied in with more or less subtle references to the publishers' products. Some teachers thought these seminars to be little more than marketing events, but many appreciated them for the opportunity to learn about new methods, pick up tips and tricks they could use in their

own teaching, and the certificates they would receive for attendance which could then be used in support of their promotion portfolios.

6.2.3.6 *Summary of Findings for RQ3*

The overall picture which arises from this study is that the official channels of communication employed by the MoE and its subsidiaries, on the whole, fail to effectively reach the English teachers, and is the unofficial channels such as informal teacher social networks or publishers' seminars which partly compensate for this. Figure 12 shows a visualisation of English curriculum change communication, as exemplified by the introduction of CEFR, and based on the author's understanding as it developed throughout the research process. The video conference mentioned at the beginning of this section is not included since it remains to be seen whether this will become a regular mode of policy communication. The diagram is in fact a simplified version, omitting several other government bodies which become involved in education policy communication. Nevertheless, it illustrates how the baroque administrative structure can have the effect of impeding rather than aiding communication flow.

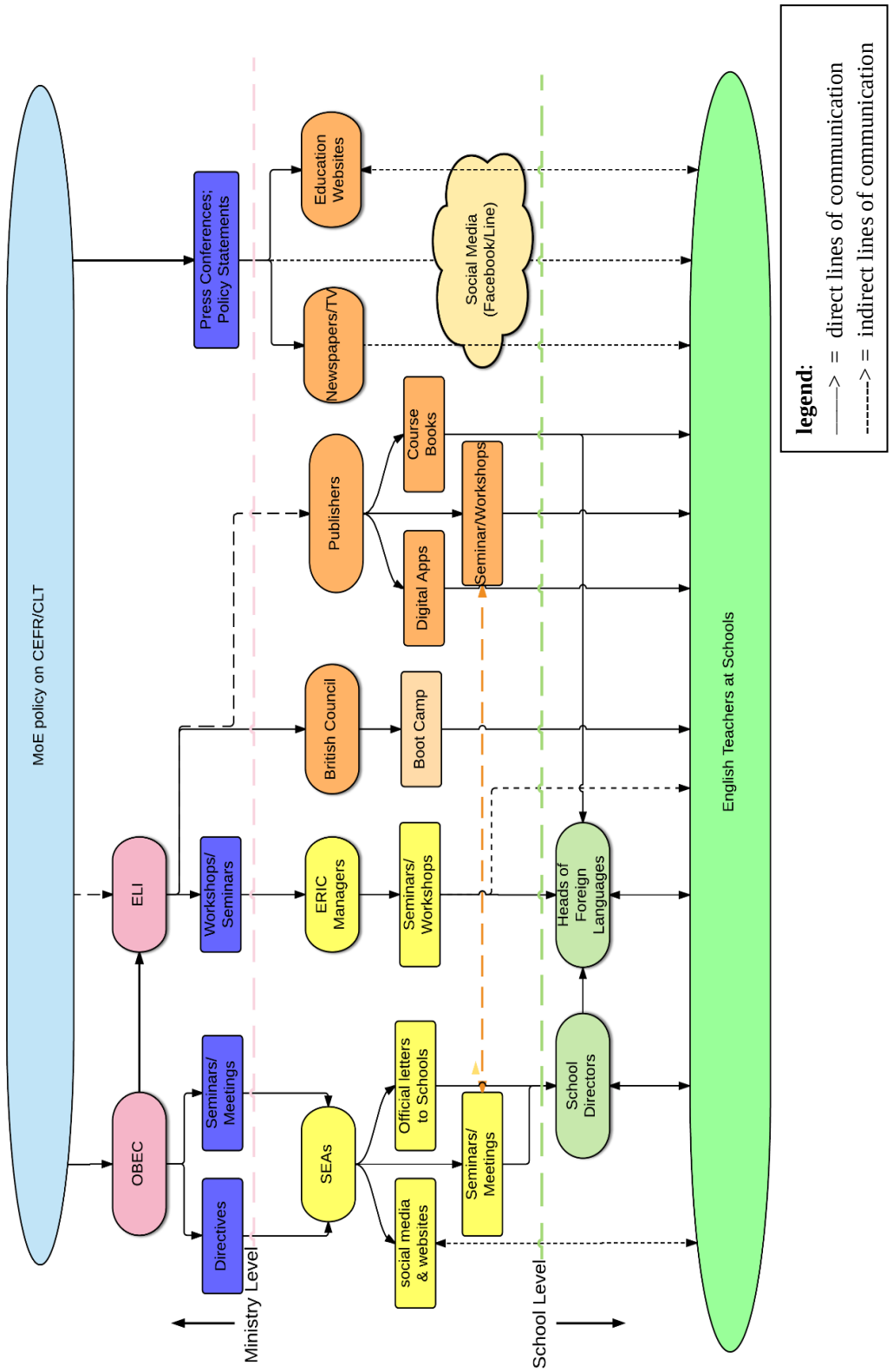

Figure 12. Education policy flow diagram

6.3 Discussion

It might appear counterintuitive to use quotes from a ministerial speech to frame a research report which aims to place teachers' experiences of policy change at the centre of its attention – to rely on the ultimate voice of authority in terms of education policy rather than voices of teachers themselves to introduce the topic. The reason for this rhetorical device was, however, that in the national discourse on English language teaching and learning, school teachers do not have a voice. They are spoken to, for, and about, and Minister Dapong's speech nicely illustrates this dynamic, while simultaneously introducing the Thai English proficiency discourse.

6.3.1 Testing, Testing

Minister Dapong and the teachers surveyed for this report have shown the centrality of testing to the introduction of CEFR, and indeed Thai education reform discourse in general. During the fieldwork period, in December 2016, the OECD's 'PISA' results were announced, and became the topic of discussion both nationally and at school level, temporarily taking the focus off the topic of English language proficiency and placing it on STEM education, particularly maths, since Thailand had again performed poorly, ranked 54th out of 70 participating countries (Mala, 2016). National test results, such as the annual O-NET scores, and international rankings such as PISA or the English Proficiency Index (EPI) study published annually by English First (2016) are quoted by the media and commentators to critique the Thai education system on the one hand, and by policymakers to justify the policies they introduce on the other. In both these applications, the question of test validity is largely neglected. As Franz and Teo (2017) have illustrated, the CEFR test which Thai teachers were subjected to in 2015 was compromised by problems in its administration. That is not to say that the overall picture of Thai English teachers' language proficiency would have been significantly different if the online placement test had been better-administered and had covered more than just the receptive skills: A2 might still have been the majority score. The question is – why are tests and their results so popular as policy-making and evaluation tools while their validity goes unchallenged?

The current education minister, Dr. Teerakiat Jaroensettasin, has shown acute awareness of the validity problems besetting the Thai educational assessment regime.

In 2015, shortly after having been appointed as a deputy education minister, he heavily criticised the Thai assessment regime when fielding an audience question about the reliability of the O-NET exam at a panel discussion:

> Let me answer this: It's very reliable, but no validity. Because everybody gets the same low mark, okay? I'm serious. The first place I went after the appointment is the National Testing Service, and I asked them to revamp their whole process. And I got Cambridge University, Cambridge International Exams to help me, and actually we did studies on the validity - there is not even content validity! There is no construct. (FCCT Events, 2015)

But at the same event, Dr. Teerakiat had himself used these O-NET results to criticise the poor performance of Thai students:

> The higher secondary students at their year 12, when they do their exams, for instance mathematics, the average national score is 20%. Standardized test, 20%! National average, worse than monkeys doing tests, because multiple choice you have 4 choices... you just have monkeys draw one line you get 25%. So that's the state of our education. (FCCT Events, 2015)

Shohamy (2006), drawing upon Foucault, Bourdieu and Spolsky, provides an explanation for the continuing popularity of test regimes with policymakers and their tacit acceptance by the general public:

> Tests offer great temptation for decision makers to use them as mechanisms of language manipulations. They are viewed by the public, especially parents, as authoritative. […] The power of tests is derived from the trust that those who are affected by tests place in them. (2006, p.112)

For Shohamy, language tests are instruments of power, deployed to exert social control and perpetuate native-speakerism. Fulcher (2010) suggests that the global spread of CEFR has been facilitated by a reification of the framework, the illustrative descriptors turning into prescriptive targets (B1/B2) in the hands of policymakers and consultants. Applying this logic to the 2015 online placement test (sourced from Oxford and Cambridge Universities' language testing units), Thai policymakers would have obtained the data to justify their plans and deflect blame for poor results, while teachers would have succumbed to the authority of the institutions administering the test, and with it to the supremacy of native-speaker-like proficiency benchmarked in the CEFR

placement test. In this context, it is interesting to see that Dr. Teerakiat in the quote above invokes Cambridge University as the higher authority called upon to evaluate the Thai assessment regime.

6.3.2 Suitability of CEFR for a Country like Thailand

Even when leaving its European origins aside, many teachers in this study said that the CEFR was too difficult for Thai students (and teachers). What these teachers based that assessment on, was their experience of the 2015 online placement test and their own scores resulting from it, combined with the targets set by the MoE (Table 2). The framework had therefore been reduced to a test and its outcome. The use of the CEFR's can-do statements, its emphasis on alternative forms of assessment and activity-based learning, had not (yet) filtered through to these teachers and were therefore not part of their appraisal of the framework.

As mentioned in Section 2.3, Vietnam had launched its policy of reforming English language teaching based on the CEFR six years before Thailand. A comparison between the Thai CEFR policy and Vietnam's Project 2020 shows several similarities: ambitious target levels for students and teachers, British Council consultancies, centralised decision-making; but they also differ in some details: in Vietnam, the assessment of teachers' proficiency was in the early stages (2008-2012) not compulsory. However, the target levels for Vietnamese secondary teachers were set even higher than Thailand's at B2/C1, with the sobering result being that over 90% of teachers were found to be underqualified, a similar outcome to that of the Thai test. Vietnam's Education Minister in 2016, four years before its completion, declared Project 2020 a failure for not having achieved its targets (Luong, 2016).

Referring to the broad spectrum of language learners rather than teachers in particular, North (2009), who has played and continues to play a significant role in the development of the CEFR, warned against 'validity creep', saying with Spolsky that it was irresponsible to lift descriptors out of the context in which they were developed and applying them in another:

> It is an age-old problem with scales of levels that once they appear to work nicely in one context they will be applied in copycat fashion to another. We must remember that the CEFR descriptors may not be appropriate to significantly different educational sectors

> (e.g. primary as opposed to secondary) or language domains (e.g. mother tongue education as opposed to modern languages). (p. 44)

Concerning the use of CEFR in non-European contexts, North linked the prospects of its adaptation to the economic status of the country, citing Japan with its eight-year project of adapting the original descriptors and scale to the Japanese context, resulting in the development of CEFR-J, as a successful example.

> But what about less well-resourced countries that cannot afford long research projects? Can the 'action-oriented approach' promoted by the CEFR or the CEFR descriptors be valid for pedagogic cultures which were not considered at the time of their development? Does a focus on the CEFR make any sense in a secondary school context in which the teachers themselves may only have level A2 or B1? (p. 45 - 46)

Questions which are highly relevant to both the Vietnamese and the Thai implementation, but in the latter case at least seem not to have been considered.

6.3.3 Teacher Language Proficiency

What evidence is there to suggest that an increase in teachers' proficiency will translate into an increase in student proficiency? Does English language proficiency alone make a good English teacher? In this study, the implicit equation of English language proficiency with English language teaching skills went unchallenged, with the notable exception of the teacher quoted in Section 6.2.1.1. In truth, the original reasoning of the planners at the MoE itself (English Language Institute, 2015) had been more nuanced, namely that target language proficiency was an important factor in foreign language teaching, and that teachers would be tested for their language proficiency to divide them into strands for further development of their language and teaching skills. But in implementing this assessment and development programme, the CEFR online test score became the only visible indicator used to rank English teachers and infer their teaching ability.

Concerning the definition and mapping of what other teacher competencies have an impact on their students' English language ability: North (2009) had for EAQUALS developed a profiling grid for language teachers which was inspired by CEFR. In it, language proficiency is a prominent, but not the sole assessment criterion. The Vietnamese Project 2020 too had generated the very similar English Teacher Competency

Framework (ETCF), where language proficiency was the basis, but not the be-all and end-all of teacher professional development.

Tsang (2017), in a recent special issue of the *RELC Journal* dedicated to the construct of English teachers' language proficiency, concluded for his research on Hong Kong teachers of English that "having a native-like or a high proficiency does not equate to successful teaching" (p. 111), and that "once ESL/EFL teachers reach a certain level of proficiency, factors other than proficiency may play a more important role" (p. 112).

6.3.4 Teachers' Professional Identities

Leung's (2009) distinction between "sponsored professionalism" and "independent professionalism" is applicable to the Thai discourse on English language education as well: English teachers are being ascribed ideal identities through the process of sponsored professionalism, and subsequently found to fall short of that ideal by policymakers and media commentators. Former Education Minister Gen. Dapong Ratanasuwan's speech quoted in the Introduction illustrates this point vividly. Interestingly, one of the studies cited by Leung (2009, p. 54) as an example for how the critical stance of teachers' independent professionalism might serve to nurture their professional selves, was on the issue of assessing ESL/EFL teachers' language proficiency in Hong Kong. Leung's call upon non-native speaking teachers of English to question the ideology underlying their being rated second-class teachers for not having native speaker pronunciation, thereby nicely linking the themes of testing and language teacher proficiency with the constructs of teacher professionalism and teacher agency as policymakers.

The findings in this study suggest that Leung's concept of sponsored vs. individual professionalism may need to be pluralised: the context of English teachers' professional identity here was the introduction of CEFR, i.e. related to teachers' identity as specialists in the teaching of English language. But in the professional life worlds of the teachers, they are not only teachers of English. They are colleagues, civil servants, they may be in charge of school finances, planning, or student guidance. With teachers' heavy load of non-teaching-related tasks, identified as one of the main problems in implementing teaching reform policy (6.2.2.6), also come multiple dimensions to their

professional identity, and they may be hailed through each of them, often resulting in conflicts of loyalty.

One retired ERIC manager recalled how she used to have frequent arguments with her school director, because she saw her responsibility as ERIC manager to all the schools in her area, whereas her director wanted her to concentrate the efforts and resources of the ERIC centre primarily on his own school (personal communication with a retired ERIC manager, Jan 2017). In this case, the ERIC manager was held to two standards of sponsored professionalism: one as a teacher at her school, the other as ERIC manager. Thai teachers of English at secondary state schools need to constantly negotiate their individual sense of professionalism with a variety of sponsored professionalisms, where their sense of being a good civil servant and fulfilling non-teaching-related administrative duties may be in direct conflict with their sense of being a good English teacher and dedicating more time to their students or lesson planning.

Many school teachers chose a teaching career partly due to the job security and benefits civil servants enjoy. Dr. Teerakiat, having recently returned from working in the UK for many years when he was appointed to the MoE, had a very different understanding though:

> It's on the record: I said that there are no teachers in Thailand. If you look at, when you ask them their profession, they will say 'civil servant'. Every teacher in state schools in Thailand considers themselves civil servant. The civil servant is a completely different notion. So the teachers, […] they are professionals. The civil servants at the ministry, which should be small in number, keep interfering with professionals, telling them what to do. How to teach. And a lot of them do not have experience in teaching. (FCCT Events, 2015)

To Dr. Teerakiat, the concept of a teacher and that of a civil servant seemed to be irreconcilable: civil servants being bureaucrats sitting in offices, whereas teachers were professionals. In that dichotomy, he was idealising the teaching profession, but in effect condemning its practitioners in their current civil servant identity.

Fitzpatrick (2011) in his research discovered that the individual backgrounds of English teachers and the contexts of their classrooms varied significantly, all of which in turn was reflected by their teaching practices. The individuality of teachers and their cognition has also been highlighted by others, notably Woods (1996) in his study of

Canadian EFL teachers. Focusing on English language teachers' understanding of and attitude to educational policy as exemplified in the introduction of CEFR, this study has come to a similar conclusion. Teachers are far from being a homogeneous unit that can be tasked with implementing education policy change transparently. While this study did not observe teachers' actual classroom teaching practices, their cognition and attitudes varied significantly. Fitzpatrick (2011, p. 45) located such differences geographically, stating that even the idea of what a school is differs between urban and rural contexts. In this study, many rural and urban teachers had mutually opposing explanations of why their situation was more difficult (e.g. a rural teacher would say that all the bright students migrated to urban schools, leaving them with the more challenging students, while a teacher in a large urban school might complain that their situation was more difficult than in rural schools because of the large number of students and a limited amount of resources).

In contrast to Fitzpatrick's findings, however, such a rural-urban divide was not necessarily located at the teacher level, and for the following reasons: teachers migrated between urban and rural schools during their career, and, especially since the arrival of social media, their support networks were not limited geographically, as shown in the case of Teachers A and G (Section 6.2.2.9).

6.3.5 Policy Change Fatigue

In regard to the policy change fatigue, the question whether the current military government was any different from previous, elected, governments was answered by teachers in two ways. One was that the current regime was just like any other government, announcing lots of changes which would not survive the next change of administration. The other was more hopeful, partly because the military regime did not have to seek majorities for its policies, had given itself suprajudicial powers in the form of Section 44 of the 2015 Interim Constitution to cut through bureaucratic regulations, and was trying to enshrine its 20-year national strategy to make it impossible for any subsequent elected government to undo. This sentiment should be seen in the context of Thailand having had 21 education ministers over a period of 16 years, meaning that each minister served only nine months on average, a fact contributing to the lack of continuity. (The Nation, 24 May 2017).

Only a minority of highly dedicated English teachers seemed immune to policy change fatigue, and an education system depending on such a minority is not sustainable. Therefore, the launch of (yet another) English language curriculum reform, even when based on a sound understanding of the major problems and done with the best intentions, needs to be carefully planned, consulted upon, and communicated to all the stakeholders, particularly the teachers, in order to be accepted, understood, and supported by more than just a minority of teachers.

A study by Nonkukhetkhong, Baldauf Jr., and Moni (2006) of Thai English teachers' understanding and implementation of a learner-centred and CLT-based approach following the promulgation of the 1999 National Education Act, echoing much of what has been presented in Section 2.2 above, found that "although the teachers had positive attitudes towards the policy, it was difficult for them as the policy implementers to adapt to the new policy requirements as they had not been properly trained" (p. 6). The authors went on to say that, lacking both information and resources, the policy goals were unrealistic and impossible to achieve, concluding that "policy cannot be successfully implemented without listening to the teachers' voices as they are the key agents of the change" (p. 8).

Ten years on, despite or because of their misgivings about frequent education policy changes, the teachers in this study also expressed the need for them to be included in the policy-making process (P5Q06). A view that as teachers, implementing the policies imposed from above in their classrooms, they already had a degree of agency and were involved in what scholars in the field of LPP have called micro-level policy-making (Liddicoat, 2014), was not expressed by the teachers in this study. Picking up on Ricento and Hornberger's (1996) spatial metaphor of LPP processes as layers of an onion, most teachers did not perceive themselves to be at the centre of the language policymaking process, but at the bottom of a top-down process as illustrated in Figure 12.

Brown (2017) applied the concept of 'resiliency' to describe how teachers in Estonia had historically dealt with curriculum change: "teacher resiliency plays a formative role in teachers' responses to and appropriation of language-policy possibilities in schools" (p. 186). For her, resiliency was a learned quality with allowed teachers to respond positively in conditions of adversity. The geopolitical changes forming the

backdrop to Brown's Estonian study and the situation of the Thai education system might not have much in common on the surface, but the concept of resiliency might be helpful in explaining the difference in teacher responses to frequent policy change.

6.3.6 Methodological Considerations: Focus on Outliers in a Conformist Survey Environment

On a methodological note, and returning to the frequent comments of teachers that they (partly) liked the questionnaire because it addressed their problems, but found questions about CEFR policy difficult to answer. Reflecting about the strong views expressed by teachers for such items they could identify with, and a suspected more conformist response to items they felt unsure about or thought to be government policy, an alternative design and analysis of surveys in such contexts might be explored. Altering the Likert scale for the questionnaire used in this project to avoid a neutral midpoint and thereby 'forcing' respondents to take a position, as suggested by Cohen, Manion, and Morrison (2011) and Dörnyei and Taguchi (2009), did not have the desired effect, as the discrepancy between the data obtained through quantitative, and those obtained through qualitative instruments has shown. Reducing such a scale from six to four points might be a better option, making some respondents more uncomfortable due to having to commit themselves more strongly, but might ultimately produce clearer trends.

But when looking at the survey responses again and concentrating on the items with the highest 'extreme' responses on the scale (6 = agree strongly, 1 = disagree strongly), as shown in Figure 13, those items with the most polarised responses could clearly be reconciled with the themes that had emerged from the qualitative data. A form of 'Outlier Analysis' might be a direction worth exploring further for cases where a conformist response pattern is suspected to be underlying the survey data.

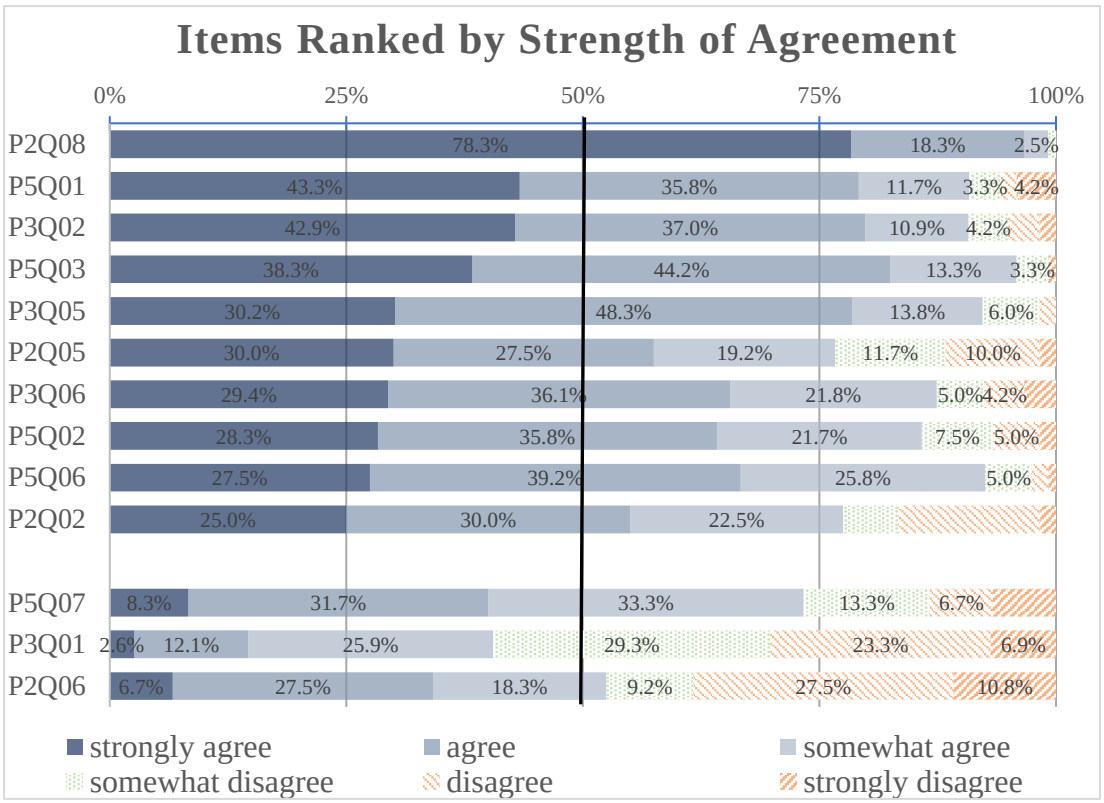

Figure 13. Questionnaire items with the strongest responses

Legend:

P2Q08	Teachers' level of English language proficiency needs to be higher than that of the students they teach.
P5Q01	Frequent changes in education policy do not lead to an improvement in the quality of English teaching.
P3Q02	English teachers are subjected to evaluation (of their abilities) more (often) than teachers of other subjects.
P5Q03	Most policy changes do not address the real problems with teaching English at my school.
P3Q05	Doing the CEFR online test has made me want to improve my English skills.
P2Q05	School duties not related to teaching English prevent me from preparing my lessons adequately.
P3Q06	It is important that English teachers' language proficiency is assessed.
P5Q02	Teachers need to be given more training in order to implement policy changes.
P5Q06	Teachers need to be involved more in the process of drafting new English language education policies.
P2Q02	My students do not have any opportunity to practice English outside the classroom.
P5Q07	My local ERIC centre supports me in implementing government education policy in my English language teaching.
P3Q01	I was given sufficient time and information about the CEFR test to prepare for the online test.
P2Q06	My students do not believe that English language skills are important for their future.

7 Concluding Remarks

7.1 Summary of Findings

This study treated CEFR as a phenomenon, aiming to explore the ways in which English language policy change was communicated to and perceived by secondary state school teachers. Using Grounded Theory Methodology as proposed by Charmaz and Bryant (2007, 2010), preliminary conversations with English teachers, a review of the relevant literature and previous research, and the development of the research instruments were mutually interdependent. All information was collated in an electronic research diary (a tree-structured journal programme), initially forming questions to pose to respondents, the emerging data through the coding process being gradually refined into themes, which were eventually articulated with established theory. The most prominent themes which emerged along the lines of the three research questions were of CEFR being a test, teachers' policy change fatigue, and a communication breakdown between policymakers and practitioners. The study also found divergence in teachers' understanding of the CEFR policy plans, a divergence which could not be explained by demographic factors, and which, together with teachers' attitude to the high level of extra-curricular workload many were exposed to, pointed to teachers being highly individual in their responses, and implicitly, their notions of professional identity being diverse too. With the exception of CEFR's suitability for a Thai EFL context being questioned, the articulation of themes emerging from the field with established theoretical constructs such as teacher professionalism, teachers' policymaking agency, the question of teacher language proficiency, or the rationale of assessment were, for the most part, not reflected by teachers' voices in the field, and done post-fieldwork by the researcher.

7.2 Limitations

The utility of the questionnaire instrument was limited due to an inability to control responses to factual knowledge items regarding CEFR policy. While piloting the questionnaire it had been found that teachers were conferring in answering factual questions about CEFR policy. With hindsight, having the questionnaire administered in

a researcher-present situation might be more time-consuming, but ultimately also be more reliable.

Widespread flooding during the fieldwork period did have an impact on the data collection schedule, as many schools were closed due to severe flooding in the south of Thailand in January 2017, and school visits had to be postponed and subsequently compressed into a tighter schedule. Some of the teachers were also affected by their homes having been flooded, and therefore may have had less time and attention to dedicate to this research project than otherwise might have been the case.

Obtaining informed consent from interview participants was a procedure most teachers were unfamiliar with, and several teachers who were approached chose to recline being interviewed, despite assurances that their identity would not be revealed in the study. The reason given most often was that they felt they didn't know enough about CEFR, and that other teachers would be more suitable to talk to. Many of those teachers were happy to chat informally and off the record though. A long-term period of ethnographic fieldwork (participant observation) might be needed to gain a deeper insight into the cognition and motivation of the silent majority of teachers.

The fact that the average CEFR placement test score of the sample population was higher than the national average (placing it in the top quartile) cannot be explained conclusively since the researcher had no way of verifying individual teachers' scores. It could be that the teachers sampled did perform better than average. But another possibility, suggested by observations made at some schools where teachers completed the questionnaire in the presence of the researcher, is that teachers actually misremembered their score, in particular confusing levels A and B, thinking that A was the higher level and since they had achieved the lower level, noting their score as B2 when they had in fact achieved level A2. Had this been the case with 5% of respondents, the sample would be in line with the national average. In either case, the overall picture of the majority of teachers having failed to reach the 'pass' levels set at B1/B2 by the MoE remains the same.

7.3 Recommendations for Further Research

This study found that some of the most dedicated teachers had chosen school and their students over a family life. In a society where the majority of teachers, particularly English teachers, are women, and women are also (still) the main provider of homemaking tasks, teachers' care commitments (children, elderly relatives) should be considered in future surveys, as this emerged as one of the factors (besides administrative workload) which had an impact on English teachers' dedication to their work. Inclusion of the domestic context of teachers in the analysis could help to shed light on what levels of time commitment the state expects of its teachers, and whether this can be sustainably combined with a family life.

Teacher cognition's contingent 'other' in terms of education policy implementation is the cognition of policymakers and administrators. Arguably their beliefs, assumptions and knowledge are as relevant to the success of curriculum implementation as those of teachers, and so should also receive researchers' attention. Kulsiri (2006) in her study of the 2001 English language curriculum did interview policymakers, focusing on the decision-making and planning processes. Her critique was that most research had focused on curriculum implementation and evaluation. A multi-sited ethnography might be the way forward to produce a multidimensional picture of education policy communication, comprehensively mapping where and how the communication breakdowns occur.

In addition, the unreflectiveness with which the need for improved standards of English language proficiency is articulated with Thai nationalism and global competitiveness by policymakers, academics, and the media may seem an easy target for critical discourse analysis, but such analysis might be worthwhile to unearth more nuanced underlying constructs.

7.4 Conclusion

This project set out to investigate Thai English teachers' understanding of and attitudes to CEFR, particularly how it related to their professional practices and identities as English language teachers.

As the research project progressed, the focus shifted increasingly from the question of teachers' understanding of CEFR to that of the researcher's understanding of how policy change was (mis)communicated. This change of direction followed the narratives of the teachers, and this thesis report might therefore strike the reader as being impressionistic at times. The content of a policy like the introduction of CEFR, e.g. its didactic merits, did not really matter in determining the success of that policy, since it was the confounding external factors, particularly the bureaucratic system surrounding any policy communication, which prevented changes to succeed in improving the levels of English teaching and learning in the schools studied. Analysing the impact of any particular policy in isolation therefore risks to ignore the underlying factors which have been illustrated in this report.

Due to its focus on teachers and the treatment of CEFR policy as a phenomenon rather than a neutral text against which to measure the teachers, this study might appear to be partisan. However, while being sympathetic to the participating teachers, the aim was to show both a glimpse of English teachers' life worlds into which CEFR was projected, and also the diversity of opinions and experiences held by them.

Teachers are of course not without fault or beyond reproach. As Teacher F put it:

> Actually, I think .. we have to think about ourselves too, not only blame the ministry. (Interview with Teacher F)

It is hoped that this study will be of potential use to policymakers and administrators who may reflect on their communication structures and practices, and also to English teachers themselves – to reflect upon their own positionality in the curriculum implementation process, English language reform, and teacher language proficiency discourse.

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Appendices

Appendix A Questionnaire in Thai Language

แบบสอบถาม

CEFR ในประเทศไทย กรณีศึกษาการรับรู้ของครูผู้สอนภาษาอังกฤษเกี่ยวกับการเปลี่ยนแปลงนโยบายการเรียนการสอนภาษาอังกฤษ ในเขต สพม. ภาคใต้ ๒ เขต

ธันวาคม ๒๕๕๙

เรียน ผู้ตอบแบบสอบถาม

ผู้วิจัยขอขอบคุณท่านที่สละเวลาในการตอบแบบสอบถาม ซึ่งใช้เวลาไม่เกิน 30 นาที

การสำรวจครั้งนี้เป็นส่วนหนึ่งของวิทยานิพนธ์ของนักศึกษาในหลักสูตรศิลปศาสตรมหาบัณฑิต สาขาวิชาการสอนภาษาอังกฤษเป็นภาษานานาชาติ คณะศิลปศาสตร์ มหาวิทยาลัยสงขลานครินทร์ เป็นงานวิจัยเกี่ยวกับกรอบ CEFR ซึ่งเป็นหนึ่งในโยบายทางการจัดการศึกษาวิชาภาษาอังกฤษในโรงเรียนมัธยมศึกษา

แบบสอบถามฉบับนี้ไม่ใช่ข้อสอบวัดความรู้เรื่องกรอบ CEFR จึงไม่มีคำตอบที่ถูกหรือผิด แต่เป็นเพียงการสอบถามประสบการณ์และความคิดเห็นของท่านเท่านั้น

ผู้วิจัยจะรู้สึกเป็นพระคุณอย่างยิ่งหากท่านจะให้ความเห็นและตอบคำถามปลายเปิด ซึ่งอยู่ช่วงท้ายของแต่ละตอนในแบบสอบถาม

ผู้วิจัยขอรับรองว่าข้อมูลส่วนตัวของท่านจะถูกเก็บรักษาไว้ ไม่เปิดเผยต่อสาธารณะเป็นรายบุคคล แต่จะรายงานผลการวิจัยเป็นภาพรวม ผู้ที่มีสิทธิ์เข้าถึงข้อมูลของท่านจะมีเฉพาะผู้ที่เกี่ยวข้องกับการวิจัยนี้เท่านั้น

รูปแบบของแบบสอบถาม

ข้อคำถามส่วนใหญ่จะมีระดับความคิดเห็น 6 ระดับ กรุณาเลือกระดับความคิดเห็นที่ตรงกับความคิดเห็นของท่านมากที่สุด เพียง 1 ระดับต่อ 1 ข้อ

ซึ่งระดับความคิดเห็น 6 ระดับ มีความหมายดังต่อไปนี้

ระดับ 6	**หมายถึง**	**เห็นด้วยอย่างยิ่ง**
ระดับ 5	**หมายถึง**	**เห็นด้วย**
ระดับ 4	**หมายถึง**	**ค่อนข้างเห็นด้วย**
ระดับ 3	**หมายถึง**	**ค่อนข้างไม่เห็นด้วย**
ระดับ 2	**หมายถึง**	**ไม่เห็นด้วย**
ระดับ 1	**หมายถึง**	**ไม่เห็นด้วยอย่างยิ่ง**

ขอขอบคุณเป็นอย่างสูง

.....

Mr. Jens Franz, นักวิจัย

ตอนที่ 1: ตัวท่านและโรงเรียนของท่าน

1. เพศ ☐ เพศชาย ☐ เพศหญิง 2. อายุ ..... ปี
3. ประสบการณ์การสอนวิชาภาษาอังกฤษ ..... ปี
4. ประวัติการศึกษา (กรุณาตอบทุกข้อที่เกี่ยวข้อง)

   ☐ ระดับปริญญาตรี – วิชาเอก: ☐ ภาษาอังกฤษ ☐ อื่น ๆ: .....

   ☐ ระดับปริญญาโท – วิชาเอก: .....

   ☐ อื่น ๆ .....
5. ท่านสอนในระดับชั้นใดในภาคเรียนนี้

   ☐ ม.1 ☐ ม.2 ☐ ม.3 ☐ ม.4 ☐ ม.5 ☐ ม.6
6. จำนวยรายวิชาที่ท่านสอนในภาคเรียนนี้.....วิชา
7. จำนวนคาบสอนต่อสัปดาห์ของท่าน ..... ชั่วโมง/สัปดาห์
8. ขนาดของโรงเรียน: ☐ ขนาดเล็ก ☐ ขนาดกลาง ☐ ขนาดใหญ่ ☐ ขนาดใหญ่พิเศษ
9. จำนวนครูประจำชาวไทยที่สอนภาษาอังกฤษ (รวมครูอัตราจ้าง) ..... (คน)

   จำนวนครูชาวต่างประเทศที่สอนภาษาอังกฤษ (ถ้ามี)..... (คน)

   จำนวนนักศึกษาฝึกประสบการณ์วิชาชีพวิชาภาษาอังกฤษ (ถ้ามี) ..... (คน)
10. โรงเรียนของท่านเป็นศูนย์ ERIC ☐ ใช่ ☐ ไม่ใช่
11. ท่านทราบข่าวเกี่ยวกับ CEFR ครั้งแรกเมื่อไร จากใคร และอย่างไร .....

    .....
12. ท่านสอบ CEFR ที่จัดโดยสพฐ. เป็นครั้งแรกเมื่อไร

    ☐ 2558 ☐ 2559 ☐ ยังไม่เข้าสอบ/อื่น ๆ เพราะ .....
13. หากท่านสอบ CEFR แล้ว ผลการสอบของท่านอยู่ในระดับใด

    (ข้ามข้อนี้ หากท่านยังไม่เข้าสอบ CEFR)

    ☐ pre-A1 ☐ A1 ☐ A2 ☐ B1 ☐ B2 ☐ C1 ☐ C2
14. กิจกรรมใด (สัมมนา/อบรม) ที่เกี่ยวกับการเรียนการสอนภาษาอังกฤษ ที่ท่านได้เข้าร่วมตั้งแต่เดือนมิถุนายน 2558 เป็นต้นมา

    ☐ การอบรมหลักสูตร CEFR 5-6 วัน จัดโดย สพม. (ช่วงเดือนสิงหาคม-ตุลาคม 2558)

    ☐ การอบรมหลักสูตร Boost Camp 5 สัปดาห์ จัดโดย สพฐ. และ British Council ในปี 2559 ที่พัทยา

☐ การอบรมหลักสูตรออนไลน์ 30 ชั่วโมง โดย Cambridge ในปี 2559

☐ การอบรมหลักสูตร Boot Camp 3 สัปดาห์ จัดโดย สพฐ. และ British Council ที่สุราษฎร์ธานี

☐ การอบรมหลักสูตรทางภาษาอังกฤษอื่น ๆ (รวมทั้งการฝึกอบรมทางออนไลน์)

กรุณาระบุชื่อหลักสูตรจำนวนชั่วโมงและวันเวลาที่เข้าร่วม

☐ .....

☐ .....

ตอนที่ 2: การสอนภาษาอังกฤษในโรงเรียนของท่าน		เห็นด้วยอย่างยิ่ง	เห็นด้วย	ค่อนข้างเห็นด้วย	ค่อนข้างไม่เห็นด้วย	ไม่เห็นด้วย	ไม่เห็นด้วยอย่างยิ่ง
1.	วิธีการสอนภาษาตามแนวทางสื่อสาร (CLT) เป็นวิธีการสอนที่เหมาะสำหรับการสอนภาษาอังกฤษในโรงเรียนของท่าน	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
2.	นักเรียนของท่านไม่มีโอกาสใช้ภาษาอังกฤษนอกห้องเรียน	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
3.	ท่านมีเวลาเพียงพอในการเขียนแผนการจัดการเรียนรู้และเตรียมการสอนของท่าน	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
4.	การสอนในห้องเรียนของท่านเพื่อพัฒนาทักษะการสื่อสารและเพื่อให้ได้คะแนนสอบ ONET เพิ่มขึ้นสามารถทำได้ควบคู่กัน	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
5.	ภาระงานของโรงเรียนที่ไม่เกี่ยวข้องกับการสอนภาษาอังกฤษเป็นอุปสรรคต่อการเตรียมการสอนอย่างเพียงพอของท่าน	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
6.	นักเรียนของท่านไม่เชื่อว่าทักษะภาษาอังกฤษมีความสำคัญต่ออนาคตของพวกเขา	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
7.	นักเรียนของท่านไม่มีทักษะภาษาอังกฤษเพียงพอในการทำกิจกรรมเพื่อการสื่อสาร ในห้องเรียน	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
8.	ครูต้องมีระดับความสามารถทางภาษาอังกฤษสูงกว่านักเรียนในชั้นเรียน	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

ความเห็นเพิ่มเติม: .....

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	ตอนที่ 3: **การสอบ CEFR ออนไลน์สำหรับครู** (หากท่านยังไม่ได้สอบ CEFR ออนไลน์ กรุณาตอบคำถามข้อ 2 และ 6 เท่านั้น)	**เห็นด้วยอย่างยิ่ง**	**เห็นด้วย**	**ค่อนข้างเห็นด้วย**	**ค่อนข้างไม่เห็นด้วย**	**ไม่เห็นด้วย**	**ไม่เห็นด้วยอย่างยิ่ง**
1.	ท่านมีเวลาและข้อมูลเกี่ยวกับข้อสอบ CEFR เพียงพอในการเตรียมตัวก่อนสอบ	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
2.	ครูสอนภาษาอังกฤษได้รับความกดดันจากการถูกประเมินความสามารถมากกว่าครูสาขาวิชาอื่น ๆ	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
3.	ผลการสอบ CEFR ของท่าน สอดคล้องกับการประเมินความสามารถทางภาษาอังกฤษของตนเอง	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
4.	หากไม่มีปัญหาด้านอุปกรณ์หรือระบบออนไลน์ในการสอบครั้งที่ผ่านมา ผลการสอบของท่านจะสูงกว่าคะแนนที่ท่านได้อย่างมีนัยสำคัญ	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
5.	การสอบ CEFR ออนไลน์ทำให้ท่านต้องการจะพัฒนาทักษะภาษาอังกฤษของท่านเอง	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
6.	การประเมินความสามารถทางภาษาอังกฤษของครูผู้สอนภาษาอังกฤษเป็นเรื่องสำคัญ	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

ข้อเสนอแนะหรือความคิดเห็นต่อการสอบ CEFR ออนไลน์ (เช่น ปัญหาในการสอบ):

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ตอนที่ 4: **CEFR และการนำ CEFR มาใช้ในประเทศไทย**		**เห็นด้วยอย่างยิ่ง**	**เห็นด้วย**	**ค่อนข้างเห็นด้วย**	**ค่อนข้างไม่เห็นด้วย**	**ไม่เห็นด้วย**	**ไม่เห็นด้วยอย่างยิ่ง**
1.	ท่านมีความรู้และความเข้าใจเพียงพอเกี่ยวกับ CEFR	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
2.	ระดับของ CEFR สอดคล้องกับมาตรฐานของหลักสูตรแกนกลางการศึกษาขั้นพื้นฐาน พุทธศักราช 2551	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
3.	กรอบ CEFR เหมาะกับประเทศในทวีปยุโรปมากกว่า เพราะเป็นกลุ่มประเทศที่พัฒนาระบบนี้ขึ้นมา	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
4.	CEFR เหมาะสำหรับการสอนและการประเมินทักษะภาษาอังกฤษของนักเรียนในห้องเรียนของท่าน	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
5.	เพื่อให้ครูสามารถนำ CEFR และ CLT ไปใช้ในการจัดการเรียนรู้ภาษาอังกฤษในชั้นเรียน ข้อสอบ ONET จำเป็นต้องมีการเปลี่ยนแปลง	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

ความเห็นเพิ่มเติมเกี่ยวกับการนำ CEFR มาใช้ในประเทศไทย:

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ตอนที่ 5: การเปลี่ยนแปลงนโยบายทางการศึกษาและหลักสูตรภาษาอังกฤษ		เห็นด้วยอย่างยิ่ง	เห็นด้วย	ค่อนข้างเห็นด้วย	ค่อนข้างไม่เห็นด้วย	ไม่เห็นด้วย	ไม่เห็นด้วยอย่างยิ่ง
1.	การเปลี่ยนแปลงนโยบายทางการศึกษาบ่อย ๆ ไม่ได้ทำให้คุณภาพการสอนภาษาอังกฤษดีขึ้น	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
2.	เพื่อสนองต่อนโยบายการศึกษาที่เปลี่ยนแปลง ครูจำเป็นต้องได้รับการฝึกอบรมให้มากขึ้น	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
3.	การเปลี่ยนแปลงนโยบายทางการศึกษาส่วนใหญ่ไม่ได้ช่วยแก้ไขปัญหาที่แท้จริงในการสอนภาษาอังกฤษในโรงเรียนของท่าน	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
4.	ท่านมักจะไม่เข้าใจการเปลี่ยนแปลงนโยบายทางการศึกษาและประสบปัญหาในการนำนโยบายไปใช้ในการสอน	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
5.	ท่านไม่ได้ให้ความสนใจต่อนโยบายทางการศึกษามากนัก เพราะว่านโยบายทางการศึกษาส่วนใหญ่ไม่ได้นำไปปฏิบัติจริง	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
6.	ครูควรมีส่วนร่วมมากขึ้นในกระบวนการร่างนโยบายทางการศึกษาวิชาภาษาอังกฤษ	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
7.	ศูนย์ ERIC ที่ท่านเกี่ยวข้องมีส่วนสนับสนุนและส่งเสริมการนำนโยบายทางการศึกษาจากส่วนกลางไปใช้ในการสอนภาษาอังกฤษของท่าน	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
8.	การนำระบบ CEFR มาใช้ เป็นแนวทางที่ดีในการพัฒนาระดับความสามารถทางภาษาอังกฤษในประเทศไทย	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

ความเห็นเพิ่มเติม: .....

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กรุณาตอบคำถามต่อไปนี้ โดยเลือกคำตอบที่ตรงกับสภาพความเป็นจริง

5.9	**ท่านได้ข้อมูลเกี่ยวกับการเปลี่ยนแปลงนโยบายทางการศึกษาจากบุคคลหรือแหล่งต่อไปนี้ มากน้อยเพียงใด**	**มากที่สุด**	**มาก**	**ปานกลาง**	**น้อย**	**น้อยที่สุด**	**ไม่เลย**
	ผู้อำนวยการโรงเรียนของท่าน	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
	หัวหน้ากลุ่มสาระการเรียนรู้ภาษาต่างประเทศ	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
	เพื่อนร่วมงานในโรงเรียนของท่าน	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
	ครูต่างโรงเรียน	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
	กลุ่มไลน์ หรือเฟสบุค	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
	หนังสือพิมพ์ / ข่าวทางโทรทัศน์	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
	ข้อมูลจากอินเตอร์เน็ต	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
	ศูนย์ ERIC	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
	ศึกษานิเทศก์ ในเขตพื้นที่	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
	สถาบันภาษาอังกฤษ / สพฐ / ศธ	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
	อื่น ๆ (โปรดระบุ)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

5.10	**เมื่อท่านมีปัญหาเกี่ยวกับหลักสูตรวิชาภาษาอังกฤษ ท่านจะปรึกษาบุคคลหรือแหล่งข้อมูลต่อไปนี้ มากน้อยเพียงใด**	**มากที่สุด**	**มาก**	**ปานกลาง**	**น้อย**	**น้อยที่สุด**	**ไม่เลย**
	ผู้อำนวยการโรงเรียนของท่าน	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
	หัวหน้ากลุ่มสาระการเรียนรู้ภาษาต่างประเทศ	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
	เพื่อนร่วมงานในโรงเรียนของท่าน	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
	ครูต่างโรงเรียน	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
	กลุ่มไลน์ หรือเฟสบุค	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
	อินเตอร์เน็ต	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
	ศูนย์ ERIC	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
	ศึกษานิเทศก์ ในเขตพื้นที่	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
	อื่น ๆ (โปรดระบุ)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

ความเห็นเพิ่มเติม: .....

Appendix B Questionnaire in English Language

Teacher Questionnaire
Teaching English and the Role of CEFR

December 2559

Dear Participant,

Thank you very much for taking the time to answer these questions – it should take no more than 30 minutes.

This survey is part of a MA degree research project at Prince of Songkla University. It is about English language education policy in Thai secondary schools, using CEFR as an example. You are not tested for your knowledge of the CEFR – there are no right or wrong answers. Instead, this survey is about your experiences and ideas. Each section has an open-ended question at the end, and I would appreciate if you would make any additional comments you may have.

For this research you will be asked some personal information too, but I can assure you that this information is only collected in order to facilitate the research project, and your information will be kept completely confidential and accessible only to the researcher.

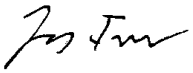
If you have any questions or comments, please do not hesitate to contact the researcher (in English or Thai) via email at: 5811120002@psu.ac.th, Line ID: mediasia

A note about the questionnaire format:
Most questions use a 6-point scale. Please choose only the one answer which most adequately reflects your level of agreement or disagreement with each question.

6 - strongly agree
5 - agree
4 - somewhat agree
3 - somewhat disagree
2 - disagree
1 - strongly disagree

If you feel that a question is not applicable to you, please use the open-ended question at the end of each section to explain why.

Thank you very much,



.....

Mr. Jens Franz, นักวิจัย

Section I: About Yourself and Your School

1. Gender: female / male 2. Age: ..... (years)

15. Teaching experience as an English teacher: .....years

16. What is your educational background? (answer all that apply)

☐ BA level – major …… ……. ☐ MA level – major.....

☐ other qualifications: .....

17. At which levels do you teach English this year?

☐ M1 ☐ M2 ☐ M3 ☐ M4 ☐ M5 ☐ M6

18. How many courses (วิชา) do you teach this term? .....courses

19. How many hours do you teach per week? .....hours/week

20. Size of your school: ☐ small ☐ medium ☐ large ☐ extra large

21. Number of Thai English teachers at the school: .....

Foreign English teachers (if any):.....

Trainee English teachers (if any): .....

22. Is your school an ERIC center? (yes/no)

23. Can you remember when you first heard about the CEFR (how, when & from whom)?

.....

.....

24. When did you take the CEFR online test organised by OBEC?

☐ 2015 ☐ 2016 ☐ not yet/other, because: .....

25. If yes, what level did you score in the CEFR online test?

☐ pre-A1 ☐ A1 ☐ A2 ☐ B1 ☐ B2 ☐ C1 ☐ C2

26. Are you aware of training opportunities related to CEFR and/or CLT? (Yes/No)

27. Which training events about English language teaching have you attended since June 2015?

☐ 5-6 day CEFR training course organised by the local SEA office (around August – October 2015)

☐ 5-week OBEC/British Council boost camp at Pattaya in March-April 2016

☐ 30-hour Cambridge online course in 2016

☐ Other training events (online or face-to-face):

☐ .....

☐ .....

☐ .....

	Section II: **Teaching English at Your School**	strongly agree	agree	somewhat agree	somewhat disagree	disagree	strongly disagree
1.	Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) is a suitable method for teaching English in my school.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
2.	My students do not have any opportunity to practice English outside the classroom.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
3.	I have enough time to write lesson plans and prepare materials for my classes.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
4.	In my classroom teaching I can combine both the development of communicative skills with the improvement of O-Net test scores.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
5.	School duties not related to teaching English prevent me from preparing my lessons adequately.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
6.	My students do not believe that English language skills are important for their future.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
7.	My students do not have enough English skills to do Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) activities in class.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
8.	Teachers' level of English language proficiency needs to be higher than that of the students they teach.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Any additional comments: .....

.....

.....

.....

Section III: **The CEFR Online Test for Teachers** (If you have not taken the CEFR online test yet, please only answer questions 2 & 6)		strongly agree	agree	somewhat agree	somewhat disagree	disagree	strongly disagree
1.	I was given sufficient time and information about the CEFR test to prepare for the online test.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
2.	English teachers are subjected to evaluation (of their abilities) more (often) than teachers of other subjects.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
3.	My CEFR score matches my own self-assessment of my English language proficiency	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
4.	Without technical problems during the test my score would have been significantly higher.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
5.	Doing the CEFR online test has made me want to improve my English skills.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
6.	It is important that English teachers' language proficiency is assessed.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Any additional comments (e.g. problems encountered during the test):

.....

.....

Section IV: **CEFR and its Implementation in Thailand**		strongly agree	agree	somewhat agree	somewhat disagree	disagree	strongly disagree
1.	I have a good understanding of what the CEFR is.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
2.	The CEFR scale and descriptors are compatible with the current standards of the 2551 English language curriculum.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
3.	CEFR is more suitable for European countries because that is where it was developed.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
4.	CEFR is an appropriate framework for teaching and assessing students' English skills at my school.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
5.	The ONET exam needs to change significantly so that CEFR&CLT can be used to teach English to Thai Mathayom students.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Any additional comments:

.....

.....

.....

.....

	Section V: Education Policy & English Language Curriculum Changes	strongly agree	agree	somewhat agree	somewhat disagree	disagree	strongly disagree
1.	Frequent changes in education policy do not lead to an improvement in the quality of English teaching.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
2.	Teachers need to be given more training in order to implement policy changes.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
3.	Most policy changes do not address the real problems with teaching English at my school.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
4.	I often do not understand the changes in educational policy and have difficulty implementing the policies in my teaching.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
5.	I don't pay much attention to policy announcements because most of them will never be implemented anyway.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
6.	Teachers need to be involved more in the process of drafting new English language education policies.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
7.	My local ERIC centre supports me in implementing government education policy in my English language teaching.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
8.	The adoption of CEFR by OBEC is a good way to improve the level of English language proficiency in Thailand.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Any additional comments:.....

.....

.....

Please answer the following questions by choosing the answer that reflect the reality.

5.9	**To which extent do you receive information about education policy changes from the following sources?**	most	a lot	moderately	a little	least	never
School Director		☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Head of Foreign Languages		☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Colleagues at Your School		☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Teachers at Other Schools		☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Facebook or LINE Groups		☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Newspapers / TV News		☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Internet Sources		☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
ERIC		☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
English Language Supervisor at the SEA		☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
ELI / OBEC / MoE		☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
other (please elaborate): ……		☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

5.10	**To which extent do you consult the following sources if you have questons regarding the English language curriculum?**	most	a lot	moderately	a little	least	never
School Director		☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Head of Foreign Languages		☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Colleagues at Your School		☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Teachers at Other Schools		☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Facebook or LINE Groups		☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Internet Sources		☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
ERIC		☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
English Language Supervisor at the SEA		☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
other (please elaborate): ……		☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Any additional comments: .....

.....

Appendix C Descriptive Statistics for Questionnaire

Table 11. Descriptive statistics for questionnaire Parts 2 to 5

Item	Question	Median	IQR*	Mode	Mean	SD
Part 2	**Teaching English in Your School**					
P2Q01	Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) is a suitable method for teaching English in my school.	5	1	5	4.76	0.76
P2Q02	My students do not have any opportunity to practice English outside the classroom.	5	1	5	4.39	1.40
P2Q03	I have enough time to write lesson plans and prepare materials for my classes.	5	2	5	4.18	1.23
P2Q04	In my classroom teaching I can combine both the development of communicative skills with the improvement of O-Net test scores.	5	1	5	4.66	0.83
P2Q05	School duties not related to teaching English prevent me from preparing my lessons adequately.	5	2	6	4.51	1.38
P2Q06	My students do not believe that English language skills are important for their future.	4	3	2	3.44	1.55
P2Q07	My students do not have enough English skills to do Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) activities in class.	4	2	5	4.06	1.18
P2Q08	Teachers' level of English language proficiency needs to be higher than that of the students they teach.	6	0	6	5.74	0.54
Part 3	**The CEFR Online Test for Teachers**					
P3Q01	I was given sufficient time and information about the CEFR test to prepare for the online test.	3	2	3	3.21	1.21

Item	Question	Median	IQR*	Mode	Mean	SD
P3Q02	English teachers are subjected to evaluation (of their abilities) more (often) than teachers of other subjects.	5	1	6	5.07	1.13
P3Q03	My CEFR score matches my own self-assessment of my English language proficiency	4	2	5	4.04	1.24
P3Q04	Without technical problems during the test my score would have been significantly higher.	4	2	4	3.93	1.26
P3Q05	Doing the CEFR online test has made me want to improve my English skills.	5	1	5	4.99	0.92
P3Q06	It is important that English teachers' language proficiency is assessed.	5	2	5	4.71	1.25
Part 4	**CEFR and its Implementation in Thailand**					
P4Q01	I have a good understanding of what the CEFR is.	4	1	4	4.07	0.93
P4Q02	The CEFR scale and descriptors are compatible with the current standards of the 2551 English language curriculum.	4	1	4	4.18	0.97
P4Q03	CEFR is more suitable for European countries because that is where it was developed.	5	1	5	4.50	1.12
P4Q04	CEFR is an appropriate framework for teaching and assessing students' English skills at my school.	4	2	4	3.69	1.10
P4Q05	The ONET exam needs to change significantly so that CEFR&CLT can be used to teach English to Thai Mathayom students.	5	1	5	4.59	1.11
Part 5	**Education Policy & English Language Curriculum Changes**					
P5Q01	Frequent changes in education policy do not lead to an improvement in the quality of English teaching.	5	1	6	5.03	1.23
P5Q02	Teachers need to be given more training in order to implement policy changes.	5	2	5	4.70	1.20

Item	Question	Median	IQR*	Mode	Mean	SD
P5Q03	Most policy changes do not address the real problems with teaching English at my school.	5	1	5	5.15	0.88
P5Q04	I often do not understand the changes in educational policy and have difficulty implementing the policies in my teaching.	4	2	5	4.18	1.28
P5Q05	I don’t pay much attention to policy announcements because most of them will never be implemented anyway.	4	2	4	3.93	1.38
P5Q06	Teachers need to be involved more in the process of drafting new English language education policies.	5	2	5	4.83	1.00
P5Q07	My local ERIC centre supports me in implementing government education policy in my English language teaching.	4	2	4	4.02	1.29
P5Q08	The adoption of CEFR by OBEC is a good way to improve the level of English language proficiency in Thailand.	4	1	5	4.28	1.20

* IQR = Inter-Quartile Range

Table 12. Descriptive statistics for questionnaire Items P5Q09 & P5Q10

Item	Question	Median	IQR*	Mode	Mean	SD
P5Q09	**To which extent do you receive information about education policy changes from the following sources?**					
P5Q09a	School Director	5	1	5	4.74	0.97
P5Q09b	Head of Foreign Languages	5	1	5	4.58	1.16
P5Q09c	Colleagues at Your School	4	1	4	4.20	0.98
P5Q09d	Teachers at Other Schools	4	1	4	3.58	1.08
P5Q09e	Facebook or LINE Groups	5	1	5	4.34	1.16
P5Q09f	Newspapers / TV News	5	1	5	4.50	1.04
P5Q09g	Internet Sources	5	1	5	4.95	0.88
P5Q09h	ERIC	4	1	4	3.60	1.25
P5Q09i	English Language Supervisor at the SEA	3	2	4	3.35	1.38
P5Q09j	ELI / OBEC / MoE	4	2	4	4.01	1.07
P5Q10	**To which extent do you consult the following sources if you have questions regarding the English language curriculum?**					
P5Q10a	School Director	3	2	3	3.18	1.38
P5Q10b	Head of Foreign Languages	5	2	5	4.71	1.22
P5Q10c	Colleagues at Your School	5	1	5	4.75	1.06
P5Q10d	Teachers at Other Schools	4	2	4	3.66	1.24
P5Q10e	Facebook or LINE Groups	4	2	4	3.70	1.16
P5Q10f	Internet Sources	5	1	5	4.53	1.13
P5Q10g	ERIC	3	2	4	3.21	1.41
P5Q10h	English Language Supervisor at the SEA	3	3	1	2.84	1.47

* IQR = Inter-Quartile Range

Appendix D Outline of Interview Structure

This question framework was an *aide-mémoire* for the interviewer, referred to prior to the interviews and on occasion during an interview. The sequence of questions was held flexible, generally following the lead of the respondents, with questions asked to clarify or move the discussion on to a different point. In no case were all the questions listed below asked.

- **Preliminaries:**
  Researcher introduces himself, the research project, and points out that the interview is not a test of knowledge of CEFR, but rather aims at gathering the teacher's experiences (with language policy change). The researcher explains why the interview is being audio-recorded, gains informed consent from the interviewee and assures him/her of anonymity.
- **Start the interview** with a few questions about personal background of the teacher, e.g.: how did s/he become an English teacher, how long have they been teaching English (overall, and at current school)? what is it like to teach English at their particular school? Which levels do they teach? class sizes/bands? are they local to the school? where did they graduate from?
- **Move on to CEFR:**
  - When did they first hear about it? how/what/from whom?
  - What did they understand the CEFR to be when they first encountered it?

 # If initial answers focus on the 2015 online test:

- How did they experience the online test?
- Preparation for it? was it easy/difficult? what was easy/difficult?
- What was their score?
- What was their colleagues' reaction to the online test?
- Do they feel that the test result adequately reflects their English language proficiency? (if not, which parts & why?)
- What is the significance of English language proficiency for their teaching practice? (balance of language skills and didactical skills)
- Does the teacher think their own performance in CEFR-based assessment will have an impact on their career?

 # If initial answers focus on CEFR (& CLT) beyond the 2015 online test:

- What do they understand the official policy to be regarding the implementation of CEFR?
- Do they find CEFR useful for their teaching (how, or why not?)
- Has their teaching or their lesson planning already been influenced by what they have learnt about CEFR?

    - How does it relate to teaching methodology? (CLT link?)
    - What are the obstacles to basing the English language curriculum on CEFR indicators (‘can do’ statements)?
    - # show print version of 2015 handbook, ask if teachers had seen/used it before.
    - Are the planned target levels for key stages M.3 and M.6 appropriate for their students’ needs?
    - How does CEFR compare to previous curriculum changes? Is this a curriculum change?
    - What was the experience with previous curriculi (or in case of novice teachers: was 2008 curriculum covered in their teacher training)?

- What do they now (end-2016) understand the CEFR to be? has their perception changed?
- Have they heard about CEFR-T(hai)? What is it?/do they think it is?
- # show MoE press release about the launch of CEFR-T

- **Teacher support and professional development:**
    - Through which channels are they informed about curriculum changes/ teaching tips/ professional development opportunities etc.?
    - What levels of support have they received? from whom? what was good about the support, what needs to be improved, reduced, extended?
        - About seminars and workshops:
          do you agree that they should take place outside teaching hours (i.e. weekends)? or should they be held during school holidays? or would you prefer not to have to attend so many? which kinds are useful/ which ones a waste of time?
- **Concluding question:**
    - What in their view would be the 2-3 most important changes needed to improve the quality of English language proficiency by Thai secondary school students?

Wrap up interview by thanking the teacher for their time.

- **Additional Question:**
    - Did you attend/watch the VDO conference on Oct 28th? if so, with whom and where? if not, why not? what was your impression? were there any announcements about English language curriculum? can you use what was presented in your teaching? how?

Appendix E Manuscript Submitted for Publication

Article

‘A2 is Normal’ – Thai Secondary School English Teachers’ Encounters with CEFR

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Abstract

Thailand has seen several English language curriculum reforms over the last twenty years, all of which were found to have failed in lifting Thai students’ standard of English language proficiency across all levels of study. In 2014, the Thai Ministry of Education announced the introduction of the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR), in combination with Communicative Language Teaching (CLT), as its latest policy to improve the standard of English learning and teaching in Thailand’s schools. The establishment of the ASEAN Economic Community (AEC) in 2015 and concerns about the economic competitiveness of the Thai labour force were provided as the underlying rationale for this policy change.

This case study, using a grounded theory approach combining semi-structured in-depth interviews, a questionnaire and document analysis, addresses the question of how this education policy change was experienced and perceived by English language teachers at state secondary schools across four provinces in the south of Thailand. A marked divergence in individual teachers’ knowledge and appreciation of the policy plans was observed, with the majority of respondents displaying indifference to and ignorance of the policy. The ministry had in 2015 tested all civil servant English teachers in a CEFR-referenced online placement test, where 94% had failed to reach the targeted proficiency level of B2. Consequently, the framework was perceived primarily as an English proficiency test for teachers, a European assessment scale which had been applied to them, but which had had no further application to either classroom teaching or student assessment. These findings are framed in the wider context of curriculum reform and English language teaching in Thailand. Comparisons with other English curriculum reform policies based on the CEFR are made, and the emphasis on testing teachers’ language proficiency is reflected upon through the wider debate on language teacher proficiency.

Keywords

CEFR, education policy implementation, teacher assessment, teacher language proficiency, Thailand

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Teacher One: *I got A2, is that good?*
Teacher Two: *A2 is normal.*

This conversation between two English teachers was overheard by the researcher in May 2015 as they were leaving a test centre – a school computer lab in a provincial school in the South of Thailand – where they had just taken an online placement test of their English language proficiency, measured by the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) scale. The Office of the Basic Education Commission (OBEC) in Bangkok had ordered all civil servant English school teachers in the Kingdom to undergo this assessment, and A2 was indeed the score achieved by the majority. For most teachers surveyed for this research project, the online placement test had also been their first encounter with the acronym CEFR.

One year earlier, in April 2014, the English Language Institute (ELI), a branch of the Ministry of Education (MoE) overseeing English language teaching, had announced a policy of basing all aspects of English language curriculum reform on the CEFR framework. There was, though, a distinct disjuncture between the text of the policy documents from the ministry in Bangkok and observable awareness of this policy on the ground, i.e. by provincial education authorities and schools. Curriculum reforms, across the globe, have often met with resistance from teachers, and English as a Foreign Language (EFL) has been no exception (Datnow 2012; Yu 2001). Readers might therefore ask what would warrant yet another study of teachers' curriculum change perception.

The introduction of CEFR to the Thai school education system was only the latest in a series of curriculum changes, and English teachers' reaction on the whole appeared passive, taking the form of indifference or resentment rather than resistance or support based on ideological agreement or disagreement. An almost complete absence of explanations to or consultation of teachers by the authorities during the early roll-out stages of this policy may have been a contributing factor to teachers taking such a stance. This constellation suggested a curriculum change which was in danger of failure from the outset, and therefore a relevant object of study.

Background

The Status of English and Curriculum Change in Thai Schools

English is taught as a foreign language in Thai state schools, and is one of the compulsory core subjects taught during the 14-year period of free basic education (pre-school to key-stage 12). The current national curriculum of 2008 uses the general term 'foreign language' throughout, mentioning only once that the compulsory foreign language is indeed English:

> The foreign language constituting basic learning content that is prescribed for the entire basic education core curriculum is English, while for other foreign languages, e.g., French, German, Chinese, Japanese, Arabic, Pali and

> languages of neighbouring countries, it is left to the discretion of educational institutions to prepare courses and provide learning management as appropriate (Ministry of Education, Thailand 2008: 252).

The state claiming control over this subject suggests that English language skills are of national importance. The 2008 curriculum, like the two preceding curricula of 1996 and 2001, provide globalisation as their key rationale. Countless Thai Master's and Ph.D theses looking into the state of English in Thailand invoke the notion of English as a global language, citing authors and models such as Kachru's concentric circles of English (see Bhatt, 2001), or Crystal's *English as a Global Language* (2003) as their opening gambit. The trope of globalisation is present in both academic and national discourses, but in case of the latter it is articulated in terms of educating a workforce fit for competition in a 21st-century global economy. Government publications frequently articulate English language with ICT skills as being essential for a knowledge-based economy.

Earlier changes to the English language curriculum in Thai schools have been deemed ineffective in improving Thai students' standards of English, with researchers, policymakers and commentators pointing to the continually low student scores in national standardized exams as well as Thailand's consistently low ranking in regional and global English proficiency league tables as evidence. All three previous English language curricula had contained prescriptions for the use of Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) activities in the classroom. Analysis of those curricula and their implementation (Fitzpatrick 2011; Kulsiri 2006; Nonthaisong 2015; Thongsiri 2005) suggests that CLT had not been adopted more widely due to the following factors:

Table 1. Factors Preventing Curriculum Implementation

	Fitzpatrick	Kulsiri	Nonthaisong	Thongsiri
Lack of communication about and clarity of the educational philosophy underlying the curriculum	✓	✓		✓
Lack of training provision for in-service teachers	✓	✓	✓	✓
Negative exam washback	✓	✓	✓	✓
Environment not being conducive to learning English		✓		✓

Raising English Proficiency with CEFR and CLT

The MoE's 2014 announcement of its 'English language teaching reform policy' articulated a nexus between CEFR as a framework and CLT as a teaching method. While CLT was being given a relaunch, CEFR was indeed new to English language teaching policy in Thailand:

> The European Council's framework of reference for language ability [sic] (CEFR) shall be the key conceptual framework for teaching and learning English in Thailand, including curriculum planning, learning and teaching

> development, exam design, assessment, teacher development, and the setting of learning targets (English Language Institute, 2015: 1).

The CEFR reference levels (A1 to C2) feature prominently in the Thai policy documents, and proficiency targets for basic education students were set by the MoE as follows:

Table 2. CEFR Target Levels for Students (English Language Institute, 2015: 2)

Student Level	Language competence Level	CEFR Level
Primary Grade 6	Basic user	A1
Secondary Grade 3	Basic user	A2
Secondary Grade 6 / Vocational Grade 3	Independent user	B1

Other reform measures mentioned are the alignment of national exams with the framework, use of CLT in language teaching, utilising online distant learning technologies, and the assessment and further development of English teachers' proficiency and teaching skills.

CEFR was developed by the Council of Europe (CoE) over a period of two decades with the aim of having a descriptive standard which allowed the comparison of proficiency in different languages, a relevant consideration in the European Union with its internal labour market and 27 official languages. CLT as an approach emerged coevally with the development of the CEFR, but CoE documents and CEFR developers state that the framework is not wedded to any particular teaching method (North 2008). And while social-constructivism is still the dominant paradigm in international EFL teacher training programmes, there have been voices in academic EFL discourse (Block, 2002; Canagarajah, 2004) who question the suitability of exporting wholesale the communicative and task-based approach to countries with varying cultural contexts. Not so in Thailand. Thai politicians display a strong sense of nationalism and parochialism in many fields, but Thai education policy discourse has questioned neither the importance of English language skills, nor the suitability of communicative teaching approaches advocated by English examination and tuition providers such as the British Council. The arrival of the ASEAN Economic Community (AEC) in 2015, with its nascent internal labour market and English as its sole 'working language,' focused policymakers' minds, raising concerns about the nation's economic competitiveness. The adoption of CEFR and subsequent contracting of the British Council to deliver a CLT-based training program for Thai English language teachers were presented as a solution to Thailand's *English language problem* (Mala, 2016).

As Kulsiri (2006) and Sae-Lao (2013) have shown in their analyses of education reform, such policy borrowing is a well-established practice in Thai education. In this case, Thailand was rather late in joining a global trend of countries

embracing CEFR to reform their English language curriculums and assessment mechanisms, with Japan and Vietnam being two prominent Asian examples. Japanese academics between 2006 and 2012 developed CEFR-J, a standard to suit the Japanese EFL context by re-mapping the can-do statements and sub-dividing the lower proficiency levels A and B by adding six additional sub-levels to allow for more differentiation at the levels relevant to the majority of Japanese learners (Tono, 2012). The Government of Vietnam in 2008 ratified 'Project 2020', a 12-year plan to improve English language proficiency by basing reform efforts around CEFR, prescribing student proficiency targets identical to the Thai ones shown in Table 2, and B2 as provisional target level for its English teachers. Inspired by CEFR-J, the government in 2014 established CEFR-V, a six-level framework, to facilitate 'teaching of English under Vietnamese conditions in accordance with European standards' (Chung, 2014).

The Study

Rationale and Objectives

This article is based on a thesis research project conducted by the first author, a European mature student, under the supervision of the second author, a Thai professor. The study set out to investigate Thai English teachers' cognition with regard to CEFR, particularly how it related to their professional practices and identities. Due to the way in which most Thai English teachers first became aware of CEFR, it is treated here as a phenomenon, an acronym which is polysemic and whose meanings are underdetermined by the policy statements which introduced it. The research question focused upon here is:
'What do Thai state secondary English teachers understand the CEFR to be, and what impact do they perceive it to have on them and their teaching?'
As mentioned by Fitzpatrick (2011) and Kulsiri (2006) amongst others, it is the teachers in the classrooms who have to implement changes to the curriculum, and it is also the teachers who tend to be blamed for the failure of any such changes (Nonthaisong, 2015).

Research Methodology

Semi-structured interviews and a questionnaire were chosen as research instruments, contextualised by document analysis. Following a grounded theory approach as refined by Charmaz and Bryant (2007), the development of the research instruments, data gathering, coding of themes and theorising was interwoven and mutually built upon each other. Grounded theory's notion of ongoing processes and their contextual analysis suited this topic, since the policy was evolving during the research period and the researcher's questions fed into subsequent informal and interview encounters with teachers, where emergent themes were further tested and refined. A research diary was kept throughout to collate and reflect upon the data.

Research Area and Sampling

Purposive sampling for this study was based on the following criteria:

- a representative mix of school sizes (classified by OBEC according to student numbers: small < 500 <= medium < 1500 <= large < 2500 <= extra-large);
- schools under administration of different SEAs;
- schools in rural as well as in urban areas;
- ERIC centre and non-ERIC centre schools.

The research area covered four provinces in the south of Thailand, with 72 state secondary schools employing 323 English language teachers of civil servant status under the administration of two SEAs. [1] For the questionnaire distribution, a 40% sample size was chosen to reliably accommodate the abovementioned selection criteria: 129 teachers at 28 schools, with 60 students enrolled in the smallest, 3500 in the largest school, and the number of civil servant English teachers at each school ranging from 1 to 18. The administration of the questionnaire and the interviews took place in December 2016 and January 2017. Informed written consent was obtained from the interview participants, and all research participants were informed of their rights, the purpose of the research and assured of their anonymity. 120 (93%) of the 129 questionnaires were returned completed.

Instruments:

Questionnaire:

The items for the questionnaire were developed to measure responses to themes which had emerged from informal conversations with English teachers, observations of teacher training events, policy statements, and previous research findings. The instrument was initially drafted by the researcher in English, retaining key Thai phrases used by teachers and in policy statements, then translated dialogically with the help of a Thai NS schoolteacher. It was further refined by two lecturers in EFL at Prince of Songkla University and piloted with 40 teachers. The final questionnaire consisted of five parts:

I. About yourself and your school (demographics)
II. Teaching English in your school (8 items)
III. The CEFR online test for teachers (6 items)
IV. CEFR and its implementation in Thailand (5 items)
V. Education policy and English language curriculum changes (8 items)

A six-point Likert scale, ranging from strongly agree to strongly disagree (Table 4), was devised for these 29 items, avoiding a neutral mid-point due to concerns about the reliability of such scales, particularly in Asian cultures where researchers have observed a tendency toward non-commitment (Dörnyei and Taguchi, 2009).

Interviews:

Semi-structured interviews lasting between 40 and 70 minutes were conducted with 10% (12 teachers) of the sample population. The interviews were conducted at teachers' schools in both Thai and English, depending on respondents' preference, and were audio-recorded for transcription and coding of themes. A selection of policy documents were employed by the researcher as elicitation tools to probe teachers' awareness of and attitudes to both the documents and the policies they referred to.

Findings

The demographics of the sample population were as follows: of 120 teachers who completed the questionnaires, 109 (91%) were female, 11 (9%) male. Their age ranged from 23 to 59, the average being 45 years, and their average teaching experience 20 years. 97% of the teachers had graduated as English majors, and 33% also held a Master's degree (43% in English, 35% in Educational Administration).

In the online placement test for teachers, 57% had scored either A1 or A2 on the CEFR scale, and 43% B1 and above. A comparison of Figure 1 and Figure 2 shows that the sample score distribution was in fact slightly higher than the national average, but in both groups the majority of teachers had failed to achieve the pass level of B1, and according to Table 2 their proficiency level was therefore below that expected of their students.

The grounded theory analysis of both qualitative and quantitative data produced four main themes around teachers' associations with CEFR, and they are presented below. Descriptive statistics and response percentages for the Likert-scale items drawn upon in this article are summarised in Table 3 and Figure 3, and Table 4 provides the interpretation of mean values shown in Table 3.

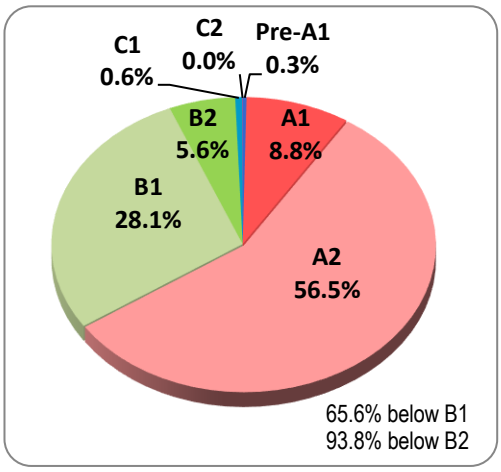

Figure 1. CEFR Score Distribution: Secondary Teachers Nationwide

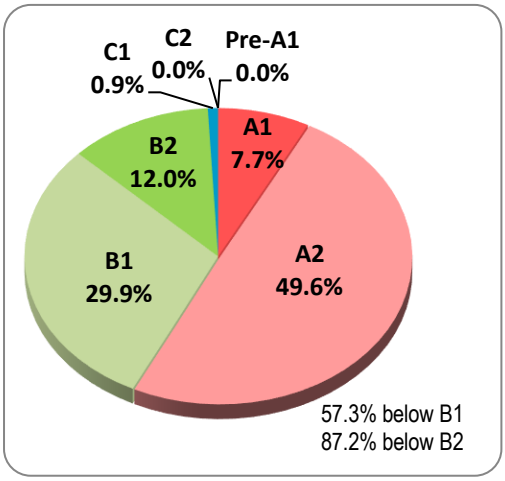

Figure 2. CEFR Score Distribution: Research Sample

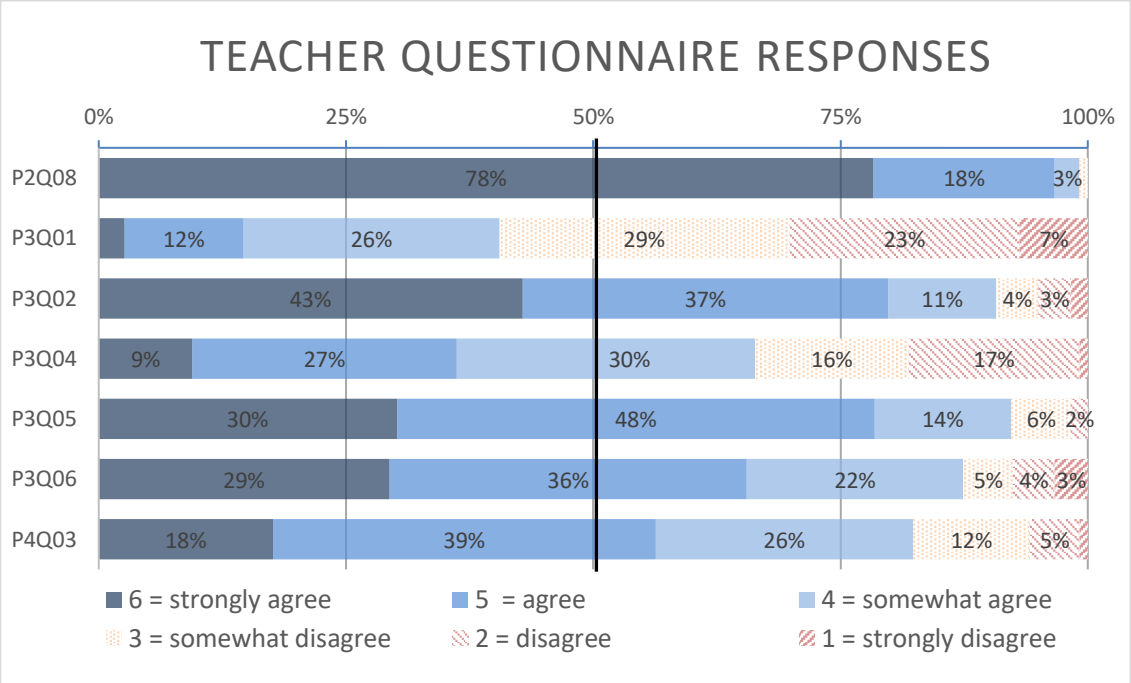

Figure 3. Visual Representation of Relevant Questionnaire Responses

Table 3. Descriptive Statistics for Relevant Questionnaire Items (N = 120)

Item	Question	$\bar{x}$	SD
P2Q08	Teachers' level of English language proficiency needs to be higher than that of the students they teach.	5.74	0.54
P3Q01	I was given sufficient time and information about the CEFR test to prepare for the online test.	3.21	1.21
P3Q02	English teachers are subjected to evaluation (of their abilities) more often than teachers of other subjects.	5.07	1.13
P3Q04	Without technical problems during the test my score would have been significantly higher.	3.93	1.26
P3Q05	Doing the CEFR online test has made me want to improve my English skills.	4.99	0.92
P3Q06	It is important that English teachers' language proficiency is assessed.	4.71	1.25
P4Q03	CEFR is more suitable for European countries because that is where it was developed.	4.50	1.12

Table 4. Likert Scale and Interpretation of Means

Likert Scale Range		Mean Interpretation		
6	strongly agree	5.18	–	6.00
5	agree	4.34	–	5.17
4	somewhat agree	3.51	–	4.33
3	somewhat disagree	2.68	–	3.50
2	disagree	1.84	–	2.67
1	strongly disagree	1.00	–	1.83

CEFR is a Test

When the researcher visited schools to introduce himself and the research project, the mention of 'CEFR' often elicited an almost-identical response: 'CEFR? The test we had last year?' which was often followed by 'Oh, I failed' and a chortle. In those situations, the researcher then steered the conversation to other matters, couching CEFR in the wider context of policy reform in an attempt to distance the acronym from the 2015 online test. But association of CEFR with that test was strong and kept returning in conversations. The policy information presented above had completely passed by most English teachers surveyed, and CEFR to them was first and foremost a test. An open-ended, optional questionnaire item regarding the CEFR online test for teachers received the highest number of comments (39 of a total 49), predominantly about difficulties encountered with the test. The most common complaints were about problems with internet connectivity, poor sound quality and noisy colleagues compromising the listening part, an unfamiliarity with the test format (online, adaptive), and the lack of information and time provided to prepare for the test.

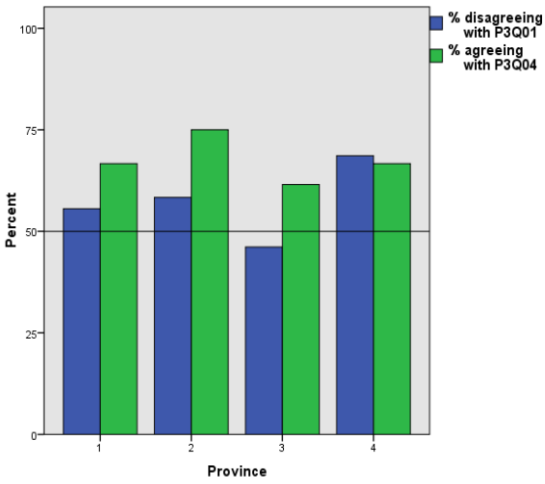

Figure 4. Placement test problems by province

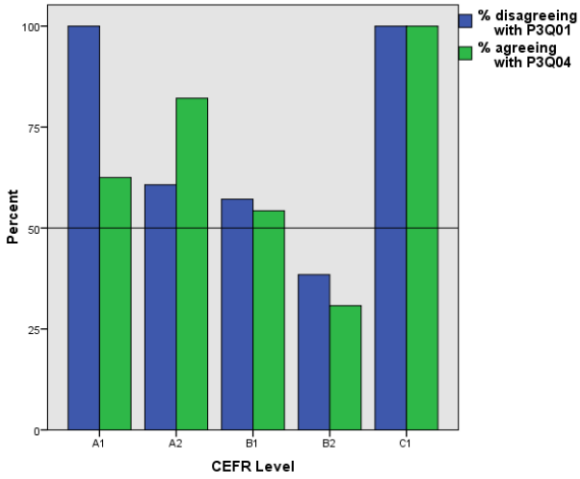

Figure 5. Placement test problems by score

That CEFR test was in fact an online placement test from either Cambridge or Oxford exam boards, chosen by the regional SEA officer and administered at one test centre in each province. As can be seen in Figure 4, in three out of four provinces more than 50% of teachers surveyed were dissatisfied with the time and preparation they were given for the test (P3Q01 reversed), and in all four provinces more than half felt that they would have performed significantly better if they had not encountered technical difficulties (P3Q04).

One might expect test-takers to blame their poor performance on extrinsic factors rather than themselves, but the researcher had the opportunity to observe the administration of the online test in three different locations, and the technical and environmental problems mentioned above were all apparent in varying degrees. Also, Figure 5 shows that unhappiness with the administration of the online test was not

limited to levels A1 and A2. Only those who had scored B2 were mostly content with the online test.[2]

This placement test had not been the first time that in-service English teachers were assessed for their English language and/or teaching knowledge, and there was a widespread feeling that they were being singled-out unfairly, as shown in the very strong and homogeneous response to item P3Q02. 'Why do English teachers have to be evaluated all the time? why not test science or Thai teachers too?' was one way in which this sentiment was expressed repeatedly. When asked why they thought they were exposed to a higher level of scrutiny than their colleagues, English teachers offered the following hypotheses:

- English is a 21st-century skill;
- other subjects do not have a dedicated supervisory body such as the ELI;
- English language proficiency in Thailand is often criticised as being too low;
- English as a subject differs from other subjects in that a language other than Thai is needed to teach it.

To some teachers who had gone through a series of exams related to Cambridge English's Teaching Knowledge Test (TKT) about five years earlier, the order to sit another exam was seen as the MoE breaking a promise, as this interview with two experienced teachers (Teacher C, in her mid-fifties, and teacher D, the Head of Foreign Languages, in her late forties) at a large urban school, shows: [3]

Teacher C: Because we had taken Cambridge ESOL before, the TKT test, modules *1,2,3*, […] and the MoE had promised us that if we passed that exam, the TKT exam, we would not have to undergo another test again. […]
Teacher D: But when the CEFR came along we were flabbergasted – being tested again, are they assessing us again? what will happen if we don't pass this time?

When asked by the researcher what had been tested in the CEFR online placement test, the common answer was: 'English language proficiency.' There had been little reflection by teachers on the scope of the test:[4]

Teacher C: TKT by Cambridge ESOL had been a *written test*, but this one came with a lot of *listening*, .. so it looked like it covered 4 *skills*. ….
Interviewer: I see. …. Four *skills* in the CEFR online test?
Teacher C: Yes, CEFR. Therefore ….
Interviewer: Four *skills* in total?
Teacher D: No, no, There weren't four *skills*, Teacher C, just reading and listening ..
Teacher C: == reading and listening .., but when we wrote -
Teacher D: == we had no *speaking*, no *speaking* -
Teacher C: == but we wrote when we read ..- Oh, no no. Yes, right - no *speaking*.
Teacher D: == no *speaking*. And there was no *writing*.
Teacher C: == yes, no *speaking*, right.
Teacher D: == also no *writing*.

English teachers did not object *per se* to being tested (P3Q06), and most also said that they wanted to improve their proficiency (P3Q05). There was near-unanimous agreement that teachers' level of English needed to be higher than that of their students (P2Q08). For teachers with scores below B1 this meant that in the eyes of the MoE they were deemed unqualified to teach. As civil servants their jobs were secure, but they nevertheless felt embarrassed, and teachers frequently asked the researcher whether there would be another test for them so that they could rectify that image of poor proficiency.

CEFR-T = 'Cambridge English Framework for Testing'

Another theme, tested in item P4Q03 and finding widespread agreement, was of CEFR being more suitable for European countries because that was where it had been developed. However, none of the respondents were aware of plans for developing a localised version of the CEFR proficiency bands, termed CEFR-T. When shown a press release by the MoE from September 2016, teachers generally approved of the idea, though for a range of reasons:

- CEFR being too difficult for countries in which English was not a 'second' but an 'other' language;
- CEFR-T might be better aligned with the current curriculum and exam regime;
- having a national English proficiency exam would cut costs.

Although anecdotal and not quantifiable, when asked what the 'T' in CEFR-T stood for, 'Test' and 'Thailand' got near-equal votes. Similarly, and on separate occasions, when asked to spell out the acronym CEFR in full, 'Cambridge' and 'Communication' were repeatedly cited for the letter 'C', and 'English' was more often cited for the letter 'E' than the actual 'European'. These examples are not given to ridicule respondents, but to illustrate the notions which underlie CEFR and the way it was understood by the teachers interviewed: it is a test, and it is foreign, more specifically 'English', not only in terms of the target language, but also in terms of its origins (= Cambridge). CEFR-T would therefore translate into 'Cambridge English Framework for Testing' – quite a plausible interpretation, given the context of its implementation.[5]

CEFR has no Impact on Classroom Teaching

Asked whether CEFR had found its way into teaching at their school, teachers interviewed answered in the negative. Since the online test in 2015 they had not heard any further announcements about the introduction of CEFR. Two teachers pointed to the course books they used in their teaching, saying that they were aligned with CEFR, but that had not made a difference to the curriculum at those schools. To most teachers, the introduction of CEFR was just one more in a long line of policy announcements which would fizzle out quickly. Teachers whose understanding went beyond the online test and proficiency levels, and who were aware of the government policy on CEFR/CLT, were a distinct minority. Teacher A, in her mid-forties, working in a small, rural school as the only full-time English teacher, appreciated how using CLT could help her students gain confidence in using English:

> I would very much like to use CEFR [in my teaching], because it is useful and not very difficult. But what we encounter is O-NET/Admission. […] The ministry wants us to use *communicative language teaching*, right?, but they also want the children to pass the admission exam. With only two lessons per week I don't know how I can do that. (Teacher A)

Echoing previous research summarized in Table 1, the negative washback from the Ordinary National Educational Test (O-NET), a national, standardised, multiple-choice test all students have to take in years 6, 9, and 12 (the same stages identified in the CEFR policy, see Table 2), was given as the primary reason by teachers why they could not employ communicative techniques. They felt that, while O-NET in its current form remained central to evaluation of both students and teachers, they had to teach to the test and, with limited contact hours, could not successfully implement policies such as CEFR/CLT.

CEFR Scores Determine Teachers' Development Opportunities

The test did have an impact on the reputation and development prospects of the teachers. OBEC had used the results to structure its professional development program for in-service English language teachers and decide who was eligible for which training. When taking the CEFR online test in 2015, teachers were told by SEA staff and ERIC managers that those who 'failed' the test would be ordered to attend a five-day workshop. Subsequent training opportunities however were on a voluntary basis, made available only to the higher performers in the online test, notably a six-week 'Boot Camp' run by British Council trainers in March-April 2016 for 350 primary and secondary school teachers under 40 who had scored B2 or higher (Mala, 2016). The ELI also selected a new generation of 'Master Trainers' from those participants. In October 2016, the MoE expanded the 'Boot Camp' approach by again contracting the British Council to run CLT micro-teaching workshops at four Regional English Training Centres. Initially only teachers with an online test score of B1 or higher could apply. Crucially, it was not communicated to the majority of English teachers, who had received scores of A2 or lower, whether and when they would be given a chance to attend these intensive three-week training courses conducted by what the MoE press releases called 'English native speaking experts.'

Discussion

Answering the research question with these four themes, it can be concluded that English teachers understood CEFR to be primarily a test, a test which was more suitable for European learners, and which the majority of teachers had 'failed.' There had been no impact on the English curriculum yet, which teachers saw to be in line with other reform initiatives. The CEFR scores from the online test had been a source of embarrassment for teachers though. As the placement test was so central in teachers' perception of CEFR, the discussion will focus on the issues of teachers' language proficiency and its assessment.

Relying only on summary CEFR levels (rather than the actual scores) obtained via a poorly administered placement test which merely examined listening and reading skills, the validity and reliability of such an assessment of teachers' English language proficiency, as well as any subsequent decisions based upon it, have to be doubtful. Whether the one-hour placement test did indeed become a high-stakes test depended on the aspirations of individual teachers: teachers scoring A1 or A2 who were eager to develop their language and teaching skills would have been frustrated, whereas teachers who didn't care much for further training could shrug off the experience more easily.

One explanation for why Thai English teachers were not more outspoken in rejecting the judgement passed on them by a test they found unfair might lie in the Thai education system itself. The O-NET exams for their students are also perceived as unfair and lacking validity, but those results continue to be the basis for teacher and school evaluation, project appraisals, and policy planning. Mapping different types of examination to Kachru's concentric model of World Englishes in ASEAN, Watson Todd and Shih (2013) found a correlation between exam style and general English proficiency levels, with higher proficiency, outer circle countries like Singapore primarily assessing language use with open-ended items, whereas expanding circle countries with lower English proficiency like Thailand tended to measure language knowledge, relying on multiple-choice items. Therefore, Thai teachers' and administrators' expectations of what a proficiency exam is and how it is used may be filtered by their past experience.

Shohamy (2006), drawing upon Foucault, Bourdieu and Spolsky, provides another explanation for the tacit acceptance of test regimes and their popularity with policy-makers:

> Tests offer great temptation for decision makers to use them as mechanisms of language manipulations. They are viewed by the public, especially parents, as authoritative. […] The power of tests is derived from the trust that those who are affected by tests place in them (Shohamy 2006:112).

For Shohamy, language tests are instruments of power, deployed to exert social control and perpetuate native-speakerism. Fulcher (2010) suggests that the global spread of CEFR has been facilitated by a reification of the framework, the illustrative descriptors turning into prescriptive targets (B1/B2) in the hands of policy-makers and consultants. Following this logic, Thai policy-makers obtained the data to justify their plans and deflect blame for poor results, while teachers succumbed to the authority of the institutions administering the test, and with it to the supremacy of native-speaker-like proficiency. Freeman also noted that CEFR was often implemented against its intended design: 'the view that language fluency equates to teaching competence simply replaces the outmoded notions of native-speakerism by privileging those who are more fluent in general English' (Freeman, 2017, p.11).

A comparison between the Thai CEFR policy and Vietnam's Project 2020 shows many similarities: ambitious target levels for students and teachers, British Council consultancies, centralised decision-making. But they also differ in some

details: in Vietnam, the assessment of teachers' proficiency was in the early stages (2008-2012) not compulsory. However, the target levels for Vietnamese secondary teachers were set even higher than Thailand's at B2/C1, with the sobering result being that over 90% of teachers were found to be underqualified. Vietnam's Education Minister in 2016, four years before its completion, declared Project 2020 a failure for not having achieved its targets (Luong, 2016).

As for the Thai test results: even if the placement test for teachers had been better administered and covered more than just the receptive skills, A2 might still have been the 'normal' score. But what evidence is there to suggest that an increase in teachers' proficiency will translate into an increase for their students too? Additionally, what other teacher competencies have an impact on their students' English language ability? North (2009) has for EAQUALS developed a profiling grid for language teachers which was inspired by CEFR. In it, language proficiency is a prominent, but not the sole assessment criterion. The Vietnamese Project 2020 had generated the very similar English Teacher Competency Framework (ETCF) where language proficiency was the basis, but not the be-all and end-all of teacher professional development.

Tsang (2017:111), in a recent special issue of the *RELC Journal* dedicated to the construct of English teachers' language proficiency, concluded for his research on Hong Kong teachers of English that 'having a native-like or a high proficiency does not equate to successful teaching,' and that 'once ESL/EFL teachers reach a certain level of proficiency, factors other than proficiency may play a more important role' (Tsang 2017:112).

Curriculum reform programmes based on the CEFR framework seem to have the dynamic of first setting the desired learner proficiency levels, and then extrapolating a higher target level for teachers, not basing such a policy decision on empirical evidence, but rather on the common-sense notion that teachers proficiency should be higher than their students'. The common scale thereby obscures other relevant teacher competencies that are not mapped to the CEFR scale. In this Thai case study, 99% of the respondents agreed that teachers' proficiency should be higher than the level they teach. As this discussion has shown, questions of how much higher, complemented by which other competencies, and measured on how localised a scale, are far from clear.

Limitations

The utility of the questionnaire instrument was limited due to teachers having been found to be conferring when responding to factual knowledge items regarding CEFR policy in a researcher-not-present situation. The general lack of policy information also meant that teachers' responses to Part IV of the questionnaire proved inconsistent with the qualitative data, and those questionnaire items were therefore excluded from this analysis.

Conclusion

Research on previous English language curriculum changes in Thailand had found that they had to a large extent not been implemented. During this study, several policy announcements were made which prompted the researcher, taking them at face value, to think that the premise for his study had changed. Most teachers and administrators who took part in the study, however, did not pay much attention to such announcements, taking, based on their previous experience with policy changes, a *longue durée* approach instead.

The way in which the CEFR/CLT policy had been introduced lead many teachers to associate it with the framework's proficiency scale, testing, and personal inadequacy, amplifying what Freeman (2017) called a 'deficit view' of their teaching abilities. The opportunity for a wider debate about the purpose of teaching English in basic education, the language and didactic skills required of teachers, or to explore alternative forms of (self-)assessment as postulated by the developers of CEFR, had been missed. But the (flawed) 2015 online placement test had also sparked a positive development with in-service teacher training: the MoE seemed committed to continue funding the regional 'Boot Camps' until all primary and secondary teachers had passed through them. Teachers who had attended these three-week training courses appreciated the practical focus on CLT activities which they could apply in their classrooms. The emphasis here was not on improving teachers' English language proficiency as measured by a standardised test. Instead, English was used as medium of instruction to improve their teaching skills.

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Notes

1. Thailand is divided into 42 SEAs, each covering two provinces on average.
2. The 100% response for level C1 in Figure 5 is due to only one teacher being at that level.
3. Interview quotes in this paper were translated from their Thai original by the researcher, and the translations verified by two Thai NS English teachers. English words used by the interviewees are presented in *italics.*
4. The transcription system follows Gumperz and Berenz (1993):
   .. = pause up to 0.5 seconds
   … = pause between 0.5 and 1 second
   …. = pause longer than one second
   - = truncated speech
   == = latching
5. In October 2016, the acronym was changed from CEFR-T to CEFR-Th.

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Thailand's Education Hub for ASEAN Countries (TEH-AC) Work Scholarship

Work – Position and Address

Scholarship Intern – Graduate School, Prince of Songkla University

List of Publication and Proceeding

Franz, J. & Teo, A. (2017). 'A2 is normal' – Thai secondary school English teachers' encounters with CEFR. Manuscript submitted for publication.