

Enhancing Lecturers' English Proficiency according to Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) for English Test

*Praepan Eiadkaew¹
Kanyakorn Sermsook²
Rattaneekorn Nakplad³*

Abstract

This study aims to compare lecturers' English scores before and after attending English training course based on CEFR. A research design of this study was a quantitative research using One Group Pretest-Posttest Design. The research instrument was English lessons (20 hours) created based on CEFR at A1 – B1 level. Each English lesson consisted of 4 parts: listening, reading, vocabulary and conversation, and grammar. The samples included 30 lecturers at the Faculty of Science and Technology with A1 – B1 English proficiency level selected through purposive sampling. The statistical method used to analyze the data from the English test was Paired-sample T Test. The overall findings revealed that the participants' post-test English score results significantly increased ($p < 0.05$). It indicates that organizing an English training course with lessons based on Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) for 20 hours can enhance participants' English proficiency. Overall mean score after attending 20-hour English training course was higher than before (pre-test $\bar{x} = 16.00$, post-test $\bar{x} = 37.13$)

¹ Full-time Lecturer at the Department of General Education, the Faculty of Science and Technology, Rajamangala University of Technology Srivijaya (SaiYai) Email: praepan.w@rmutsv.ac.th

² Assistant Professor at the Department of General Education, the Faculty of Science and Technology, Rajamangala University of Technology Srivijaya (SaiYai) Email: rattaneekorn.p@rmutsv.ac.th

³ Assistant Professor at the Department of General Education, the Faculty of Science and Technology, Rajamangala University of Technology Srivijaya (SaiYai) Email: kanyakorn.pi@rmutsv.ac.th

from the total of 50 scores. Examining the results of each skill, vocabulary and conversation was the skills with the highest mean scores (pre-test \bar{x} = 9.53, post-test \bar{x} = 17.13) comparing to other 3 skills (Reading, Listening, and Grammar), while Listening was identified as the weakest skill (pre-test \bar{x} = 0.23, post-test \bar{x} = 5.76).

Keywords: English proficiency, Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR), University lecturer, SPEEX online program, English learning lesson

1. Introduction

English is an important and essential language in the digital era due to the fact that the convenience of communication is facilitated by the internet. Many international organizations have designated English as an official language. (United Nations, 2014; Kirkpatrick, 2008). According to the survey, it was found that the number of both native and non-native English speakers is approximately 1,900,000 people. (<http://www.babbel.com/en/magazine/how-many-people-speak-english-and-where-is-it-spoken>, 2019). Hence, English proficiency and communication are regarded as an essential for many careers in society, such as politicians, administrators, teachers or lecturers, as well as students (Nanthasudsawaeng, 2020). Moreover English is still widely used in various fields including science, tourism, and media. In addition, English is now a universal language (Nunan, 2013). People with good English abilities are considered employable in workplaces all over the world (Boonjing et al, 2019). As a result, many government and private organizations in Thailand, including Rajamangala University of Technology Srivijaya focus on English competence.

According to the university announcement (June 19, 2021), it was stipulated that the recruitment of an academic officer or lecturer in any departments must include English scores from standardized tests such as TOEIC, TOEFL, IELTS, and CU-TEP. Therefore, English proficiency is considered a fundamental requirement for all lecturers in the university. Recognizing the importance of enhancing lecturers' English proficiency for effective teaching and learning management, Rajamangala University of Technology Srivijaya has integrated this aspect into its long-term education management concept. As part of this initiative, the university introduced the online learning program (SPEEXX) in 2018 to develop lecturers' English proficiency. English post-test score in each fiscal year is designated as part of the evaluation (Academy and Registration office, 2019). Hence, the lecturers in all fields are required to improve their English proficiency, considered one of the 21st century skills, enabling them to apply English to their teaching and learning activities, as well as contribute to international research publications and progress the teaching profession.

The online learning program (SPEEXX) that the university implemented to improve the lecturers' English proficiency was designed based on CEFR. This online program contained English learning lessons and tests. CEFR consists of six levels of English proficiency from A1 to C2 and is widely recognized in academic and educational fields. CEFR has been applied in various placement tests such as TOEIC, TOEFL, and IELTS. These placement tests are used to test English proficiency of teachers, high school students, college students, and the general public. Comparing the scores from placement tests to CEFR's English levels is common practice as CEFR is widely accepted and used worldwide (Ketamon et al, 2017).

According to SPEEXX's 2nd post-test report in the year of 2020, it was discovered that the majority lecturers (63 out of 70) at the Faculty of Science and Technology, RUTS enrolled and participated in SPEEXX's English test, and 28 out of 63 could obtain the test score of 70 percent which met the university's criterion (Academy and Registration office, 2019). The results of SPEEXX's English test showed the CEFR levels and scores of each person. SPEEXX online program was designed based on CEFR levels. The lecturers who had a level between A1 – B1 according to SPEEXX's English test and didn't pass SPEEXX's English test were asked to participate in this study. The researchers expected that these participants would gain English knowledge from this training course.

It is very important and necessary to promote English proficiency of lecturers whose English score was under the university's criteria. This English training course may assist these lecturers to pass SPEEXX's English test. Moreover, it is hoped that their overall English language skills may be enhanced so that they could apply English to their teaching. This aligns with the education management concept of Re-RUTS University (Re-RUTS Lecturer Platform). This concept aims to upgrade the lecturers' quality in the aspect of applying English language in teaching and learning and publishing academic or research papers at an international level. This strategic approach contributes to positioning the university as outstanding in fulfilling its teaching and learning mission. As this study focused on developing lecturers' knowledge of English in order to pass SPEEXX's English test, 20-hour English workshop was organized to serve the objective. Also, this is a set of requirements from the university for lecturers of every field to attain CEFR level of English proficiency. So, the researcher needs to devise this course to upgrade the lecturers' CEFR English proficiency. This study specifically aimed to improve lecturers' English proficiency by using 20-hour

lessons and to examine whether they were improved by the 20-hour lessons, so the results between pre and post-test were compared statistically. During the training course, the participants can exchange their ideas, have an opportunity to brainstorm the answers of the drills, and are able to pose questions to the guest speakers. Face to face teaching and learning can enhance English language learning better than an online program. In addition, the participants can directly interact with the guest speakers.

2. Research Questions

1. Is there any significant difference between pre-test and post-test scores in overall after attending CEFR English training course?
2. Is there any significant difference between pre-test and post-test scores in each skill in terms of CEFR levels?"

3. Literature Review

3.1 The Common European Framework of Reference for Languages

CEFR of The Common European Framework of Reference for Languages is a national standard which the European Union (E.U.) created to test English proficiency in four skills (listening, speaking, reading, and writing). CEFR test is separated into 3 groups and 6 levels from a basic level to the highest level (A1, A2, B1, B2, C1, and C2). A basic level consists of A1 and A2. An intermediate level consists of B1 and B2. The highest level consists of C1 and C2 (Council of Europe, 2015). The table of CEFR levels below.

Table 1 The Common European Framework of Reference for Languages
(Source: Council of Europe, 2015)

CEFR levels	Definitions of proficiency levels
<p>A1 (Basic User)</p> <p>Topics: everyday expressions, satisfaction of needs, personal details</p>	<p>Can understand and use familiar everyday expressions and very basic phrases aimed at the satisfaction of needs of a concrete type. Can introduce himself/herself and others and can ask and answer questions about personal details such as where he/she lives, people he/she knows and things he/she has. Can interact in a simple way provided the other person talks slowly and clearly and is prepared to help.</p> <p>Grammatical features: Verbs, Adjectives, Adverbs of frequency, How much/many, Going to, There is/are, Pronoun, Prepositions of place and time, Present simple and continuous, Modals (would like/can/can't/could/couldn't)</p>
<p>A2 (Basic User)</p> <p>Topics: basic personal and family information, shopping, local geography, employment, routine matters, background and immediate environment</p>	<p>Can understand sentences and frequently used expressions related to areas of most immediate relevance (e.g. very basic personal and family information, shopping, local geography, employment). Can communicate in simple and routine tasks requiring a simple and direct exchange of information on familiar and routine matters. Can describe in simple terms aspects of his/her background, immediate environment and matters in areas of immediate basic need.</p> <p>Grammatical features: Adjectives, Comparative and Superlative, Adverbial phrases of time, place, and frequency, Articles with countable and uncountable nouns, Gerunds, Imperatives, Modals (can/could/have to/should), past simple and continuous, Present perfect, Wh-questions</p>

Table 1 The Common European Framework of Reference for Languages
(Source: Council of Europe, 2015) (Cont.)

CEFR levels	Definitions of proficiency levels
<p>B1 (Independent User)</p> <p>Topics: familiar (work, school, leisure), personal interest, experiences and events, dreams, hopes and ambitions, opinions and plans</p>	<p>Can understand the main points of clear standard input on familiar matters regularly encountered in work, school, leisure, etc. Can deal with most situations likely to arise whilst traveling in an area where the language is spoken. Can produce simple connected text on topics which are familiar or of personal interest. Can describe experiences and events, dreams, hopes and ambitions and briefly give reasons and explanations for opinions and plans.</p> <p>Grammatical features: Adverbs, Comparatives and superlatives, Complex question tags, Conditionals, Expressing cause and effect, Modals (may, might, will, must, have to), Past simple/continuous/perfect, Phrasal verbs, Conjunctions</p>
<p>B2 (Independent User)</p> <p>Topics: fields of specialization, wide range of subjects, topical issues</p>	<p>Can understand the main ideas of complex text on both concrete and abstract topics, including technical discussions in his/her field of specialization. Can interact with a degree of fluency and spontaneity that makes regular interaction with native speakers quite possible without strain for either party. Can produce clear, detailed text on a wide range of subjects and explain a viewpoint on a topical issue giving the advantages and Independent disadvantages of various options.</p> <p>Grammatical features: Adjectives and adverbs, Future continuous and perfect, Mixed conditionals, Passives, Past perfect/past perfect continuous, Phrasal verbs, Relative clauses, Will and going to, Wish, Would expressing habits/ in the past</p>

Table 1 The Common European Framework of Reference for Languages
(Source: Council of Europe, 2015) (Cont.)

CEFR levels	Definitions of proficiency levels
<p>C1</p> <p>(Proficient User)</p> <p>Topics: social, academic and professional purposes, complex subjects (ethics, education, quality of life), events and issues in the news</p>	<p>Can understand a wide range of demanding, longer texts, and recognize implicit meaning. Can express himself/herself fluently and spontaneously without much obvious searching for expressions. Can use language flexibly and efficiently for social, academic and professional purposes. Can produce clear, well-structured, detailed text on complex subjects, showing controlled use of organizational patterns, connectors and cohesive devices.</p> <p>Grammatical features: Mixed conditionals in past, present, and future, Modals in the past, Passive forms, Phrasal verbs, Wish/if</p>
<p>C2</p> <p>(Proficient User)</p> <p>Topics: science and technology, robots and new inventions, celebrities, finance, stress in life, techniques for doing research</p>	<p>Can understand with ease virtually everything heard or read. Can summarize information from different spoken and written sources, reconstructing arguments and accounts in a coherent presentation.</p> <p>Can express him/herself spontaneously, very fluently and precisely, differentiating finer shades of proficient meaning even in more complex situations.</p> <p>Grammatical features: Subjunctive mood, Imperative, Mixed conditionals in past, present, and future, Inversion (structure), Relative clauses, adverb clauses, Passive voice clauses, Comparatives and superlatives with intensifiers, Adverbs with prepositional phrases</p>

The origin of CEFR can be traced back to the Council of Europe that aimed to establish a standardized assessment of language proficiency for applicants in educational institutions and organizations. At present, a variety of countries in Asia and America adopted CEFR for application in their educational systems such as Japan, Singapore, Malaysia, Vietnam, and Thailand (www.efset.org/th/cefr/: 8 April 2021). CEFR was designed to serve as simple set of criteria for developing instructional media and assessments for English teaching and learning such as books, English courses, English development guidelines, and English placement tests. Furthermore, CEFR was conceptualized to develop both the knowledge and skills of English learners guiding them in effective communication and overall proficiency.

3.2 CEFR and Its Application in Language Education

In 2014, the Minister of Education “Mr.Chaturon Chaisang” announced the adoption of CEFR as a standard for reforming English language teaching and learning around Thailand. He emphasized that “If the schools apply CEFR in their teaching and learning, it could be asserted that English skills of Thai students would improve, enabling them to compete effectively with other foreign students” (James, 2015). Alongside the announcement of CEFR adoption in English teaching and learning, Intathep (2014) highlighted that this announcement not only aimed to enhance Thai students’ English proficiency, but also to encourage Thai English teachers to improve their own English proficiency by taking placement tests based on CEFR. Nowadays, Thailand has integrated CEFR in English teaching and learning, curriculum design, assessment and evaluation, including English teacher development. To encourage English teachers, particularly those in primary and secondary schools two key strategies have been employed: 1) organizing workshops on teaching techniques, specifically Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) and 2) hosting Boot Camp workshops. Both workshops feature foreign

speakers who are experts in teaching and learning, often affiliated with the British Council institution (Nawong et al., 2562).”

The policy reformation in English teaching and learning was integrated by combining CEFR and Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) teaching method as CLT was developed alongside CEFR development (North, 2008). In Thailand, a significant challenge faced by Thai students was their communication skills. CEFR integration as a guideline in using CLT as teaching strategy for English teachers was considered as the optimal solution for addressing the communication problems in English among Thai students. (Mala, 2016)

4. Empirical Studies

Referring to previous studies, there has been a limited number of research endeavors focusing on the development of lecturers' English skills or proficiency according to the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR). The majority of the studies have focused on the effects of English language teaching and learning according to CEFR to students. Some studies focused on the attitudes of primary and secondary English teachers towards CEFR framework. The following are some examples of these studies.

Yodsri et al. (2023) studied current situation and effects of developing English teacher skills according to the rules of professional competence in Surat Thani province. 10 non-English major teachers were asked to complete a questionnaire, test, observation form, supervision form, assessment, and satisfaction questionnaire. Overall result revealed that 1) non-English major teachers had limited opportunities to develop their English proficiency, and 2) scores before and after attending English seminar with a CEFR test showed improvement with high satisfaction levels in English development.

Phoolaikao (2021) studied pre-service teachers' perspective regarding CEFR integration in English teaching. This mixed-method research involved a sample of 200 pre-service English teachers in Pratom 4 and 5 of the government universities in the Northeast of Thailand selected through convenience sampling. 15 participants from the initial sample were further selected for interviews. Research instruments contained 1) Likert's scale questionnaire and 2) semi-structured interviews. The overall findings of the study indicated that pre-service teachers were aware of application of CEFR in English teaching at intermediate level. In terms of specific aspects, pre-service teachers demonstrated better understanding in English assessment compared to English teaching applying CEFR framework correctly.

Narkwachara and Permtanjit (2020) conducted a study on methods for developing lecturers' English language skills in Ramkhamhaeng University utilizing in-depth interviews. 15 university directors were randomly selected as interviewers. The findings revealed that Ramkhamhaeng University encourages all lecturers to use English in their teaching and learning and their self-development by six methods as follows. First, encouraging lecturers participate in English seminars and international exchanges. Second, supporting students to pursue higher degrees or Ph.D. Third, allocating staff to provide support for the lecturers. Fourth, encouraging the publication of research papers in international journals. The fifth method was encouraging lecturers to apply for academic positions. Lastly, providing financial support for research endeavors.

Waluyo (2019) studied CEFR's English competence of the first-year college students at Walailak University. The participants consisted of 2,248 first-year college students: 1,664 male and 584 female. The research utilized 2 instruments: 1) WU-TEP standard test consisting of listening, reading, writing, and speaking test based on CEFR and 2) Classical Test Theory (CTT).

The findings revealed that, overall, the students (77.30 percentages) were categorized as Basic English users level (A1 and A2) based on WU-TEP standard test designed according to CEFR.

Karnchai (2019) studied English university lecturers' attitude towards CEFR integration in English language teaching and learning including English curriculum management. Semi-structured interviews were used to collect qualitative data with 33 university English lecturers. The findings indicated that English lecturers in the university were well-informed about CEFR, with particular emphasis on the assessment and classroom design based on CEFR principles.

Suripan et al. (2018) explored the efficiency of English training course focused on communication for 30 school directors at the Primary Educational Service Area Office, Ubon Ratchathani province. One-group Pretest-Posttest Design was used to collect data. Overall findings revealed that this English training course was acceptable at the high level (Up to 80 percent). Additionally, the study revealed a statistically significant improvement (0.05) in the English proficiency of the school directors after the training, with a high level of satisfaction expressed towards the workshop.

Marsaulina (2018) investigated the obstacles about English assessment in accordance with CEFR such as TOEFL and IELTS among 48 information technology lecturers in Indonesian technology institutions. The study utilized a mixed-methods research design, incorporating both quantitative and qualitative data. Research instruments consisted of 1) 3-point Likert's rating scales questionnaire and 2) open-ended questionnaire. The overall findings showed that the obstacles affecting the mentioned lecturers' English scores were an inefficient English learning technique. Moreover, the study identified several challenges faced by the lecturers: 1) integration between learning process with original learning technique 2) the selection of teaching

methodologies or techniques and 3) a lack of efficient English learning techniques. In addition, the qualitative analysis revealed 2 obstacles: 1) shortage of technology for supporting English learning and 2) time constraints.

Ketamon (2016) studied English proficiency levels in all 4 skills of high school students across 7 lower Southern provinces. 222 high school students were randomly selected to take part in the study using Taro Yamane' statistics. Overall findings indicated that the students passed English proficiency test at the A2 level according to CEFR. The mean score was at 42.71 from 80. It means that these students had English proficiency at low level.

In conclusion, the literature review on the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR) in the context of Thai research predominantly emphasizes the assessment of Thai students' CEFR English proficiency, with limited attention given to Thai teachers or lecturers. Even when studies did focus on educators' CEFR English proficiency, the participants were primarily English teachers or lecturers, rather than individuals from various fields. The majority of findings indicated that Thai students typically demonstrated Basic English proficiency, falling within the A1 and A2 levels according to CEFR. Contrastingly, studies conducted in foreign countries revealed that English proficiency levels of non-English-teaching teachers were often at the intermediate level, corresponding to B2 on the CEFR scale. In Thailand, the research landscape has primarily concentrated on exploring methods and techniques for developing English skills, as well as investigating teachers' attitudes toward the integration of CEFR in English teaching and learning. There is relatively less focus on organizing English training courses or seminars for teachers or lecturers. The literature review and empirical studies leads to the conceptual framework of the study below.

Conceptual framework of the study consisted of 2 variables: 1) independent variable and 2) dependent variable. Independent variable included 20 hours English training course based on CEFR. Dependent variable included participants' CEFR English Pre-Post test scores. This conceptual framework was deducted from the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR) for Languages (Council of Europe, 2015), and the literature review including empirical studies. They were taught for 20 hours (2 hours for each day) about listening, reading, conversation and vocabulary, and grammar based on CEFR from A1 – B1 level. Communication Language Teaching (CLT) approach was used to teach vocabulary and conversation, including listening part. Grammar Translation method was used to teach grammar. Reading comprehension technique was used to teach reading part. In every class, the participants were taught to listen to conversations and were introduced listening comprehension technique before doing multiple choice questions. For vocabulary and conversation part, the participants were introduced vocabularies and then chose the correct answers to complete the short conversation and chose the correct words to complete sentences. For listening and vocabulary and conversation part, role-play, discussion, game, and pair work activities under CLT approach were used. For reading, they were taught to read passages using reading comprehension strategy such as predicting, questioning, and summarizing. After that, they had to do the drill using true or false and multiple choice questions. For grammar part, they were taught grammar rules and sentence structures before doing multiple choice questions. Every class, face-to-face communication was used and the participants were able to ask any questions with each lecturer.

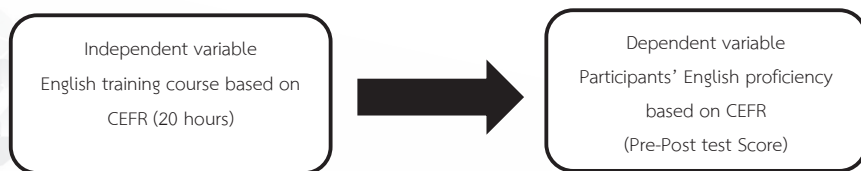


Figure 1: Conceptual Framework of the Study

5. Methodology

This study employed a quantitative research design utilizing quasi-experimental approach to compare between participants' pre-test and post-test scores after English training course following an English training course with lessons based on CEFR.

5.1 Population

Population in this study consisted of a total of 70 lecturers from the faculty of Science and Technology at the University located in the South of Thailand.

5.2 Samples

Samples of this study were 30 lecturers from four different fields (General Education, Thai Traditional Medicine, Science, and Technology) selected through purposive sampling. The selected lecturers were classified as volunteer participant took the 2nd test of English online program (SPEEXX) in the fiscal year of 2020 achieving a proficiency level between A1 to B1 only. Additionally, they did not meet the university's criteria by not attaining a score of at least 70 percent of their level.

5.3 Research Instrument

Research instrument consisted of 1) the questionnaire requesting participation in English training course, 2) English learning lessons based on CEFR level between A1 to B1, 3) English pre and post-test based on CEFR. The following describes the details of each research instrument.

5.3.1 Questionnaire contained 8 question items: 1) Full name and telephone number, 2) Age, 3) Educational degree, 4) Department (General Education, Thai Traditional Medicine, Science, and Technology), 5) SPEEXX program's latest English level, 6) English training or seminar experience, 7) Level of interest in participating in an English training course based on CEFR, and 8) Time availability and convenience for English training course participation.

5.3.2 English learning lessons based on Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) comprised a total of 20 hours over a span of 10 days with 2 hours of instruction per day. The lessons (10 Units) were selected from English books and websites. English content in each lesson was tailored to cover proficiency levels from A1 to B1. Main parts of English learning lessons included 1) basic phrases related to daily life and various topics such as personal information, family, buying things, local geography, and employment, 2) conversations focusing on self-introduction, seeking assistance, daily routines, and discussing general information, 3) reading short and simple passages, and 4) word completion exercises centered around simple topic such as personal information. Each lesson consisted of listening, reading, grammar, vocabulary and conversation part which was adhered to CEFR descriptors in three levels (A1 – B1). The content for the English learning lessons (10 Units) were approved by 3 English language experts using Index of Item Objective Congruence: IOC to find content validity Rovinelli and Hambelton (1997). After incorporating expert suggestions and edits to the content, IOC Index yielded a score of +1 indicating a high correlation between the content and the objectives of the study. The table below outlines the topics covered in each unit for the four English skills (Listening, Reading, Grammar, Vocabulary and Conversation).

Table 2 Topics Covered in Each Unit and CEFR Level

Units	Topics	CEFR Level
1	Vocabulary and Conversation: Offering help, Ordering food, Asking price, Asking about places Reading: The daily routines of a sportswoman Listening: Weather Grammar: Pronoun, Much/Many, Auxiliary verbs, Tenses	A1, A2
2	Vocabulary and Conversation : Personality, Booking a hotel Reading: Free time Listening: Accommodation Grammar: Prepositions, Tenses, Articles	A1, A2, B1
3	Vocabulary and Conversation : Transportation, Music Reading: Online shopping Listening: Free time activities Grammar: Tenses, Auxiliary verbs, Conjunctions	A2, B1
4	Vocabulary and Conversation : Feelings, Occasions Reading: Weather: Madagascar-When to go Listening: Holidays Grammar: Verb to be, Has/have, like/like to, Pronouns, Prepositions, Quantity	A1, A2, B1
5	Vocabulary and Conversation : Daily routines, News Reading: A trip around the USA Listening: Summer work Grammar: Quantity, Was/Were, Comparative, Superlative, Tenses, Relative pronouns	A1, A2, B1
6	Vocabulary and Conversation : Food, Daily routines Reading: My neighborhood Listening: Restaurant Grammar: Tenses, Adverb of frequency, Wh-questions, Comparative, Superlative	A1, A2

Table 2 Topics Covered in Each Unit and CEFR Level (Cont.)

Units	Topics	CEFR Level
7	Vocabulary and Conversation : Daily routines, shopping, Hobby Reading: What do you do with your free time? Listening: Shopping Grammar: Adverb, Auxiliary verb, Preposition, Pronoun, Verb to be, Tenses	A1, A2
8	Vocabulary and Conversation : Daily routines, Weather, Having dinner, Giving direction Reading: About my family Listening: Hotel Grammar: Yes/No question, Preposition, Pronoun, Quantity	A1, A2, B1
9	Vocabulary and Conversation: Giving direction, Expression, Internet Reading: Chinese New Year Listening: Describing people Grammar: Tenses, Relative pronoun, Preposition, Conjunction, Auxiliary verb	A1, A2, B1
10	Vocabulary and Conversation : Party, Emergency or medical service Reading: Finding a job Listening: Buying some food Grammar: Preposition, Tenses, Auxiliary verb, If clause, Pronoun	A2, B1

5.3.3 English pre and post-test (same version) consisted of 50 multiple choice questions items based on CEFR at levels A1 to B1. In vocabulary and conversation part, items 4, 6 – 13, 16 – 17, 20 are from CEFR A1, items 2, 3, 5, 15 are from CEFR A2, and items 1, 14, 18, 19 are from CEFR B1. In reading part, items 26 – 31 are from CEFR A1 and items 21 – 25 are from CEFR A2. In listening part, items 32 – 41 are from CEFR B1. In grammar part, items 42 and 49 are from CEFR A2 and items 43 – 48 and 50 are from CEFR B1. The test covered various English skills: listening, reading, grammar, vocabulary, and conversation, but not included writing and speaking skills. The link between pre and post-test and SPEEXX online program was actually from the university's criterion that required the lecturers to pass 70 percent of their levels in SPEEXX's English test. SPEEXX's English test was designed based on CEFR into many parts: listening, reading, vocabulary and conversation, and grammar. Content validity, measured by the Index of Item Objective Congruence (IOC), was employed with the input of three English experts. Following the experts' recommendations and necessary content edits, the IOC Index yielded a score of +1, indicating a high correlation between the content and the objectives of this study. This process ensured that the test accurately reflected the intended goals and content of the study.

5.4 Data-collection procedures

Quantitative data collection took place in 20 hours within 10 days (2 hours a day) in April, 2023. It took consecutive 10 days for the completion of English training course. The data collection process can be described in the following steps.

5.4.1 Before commencing the English training course, the researcher conducted an orientation for participants. This included providing details about the guest speakers consisting of 2 Thai lecturers and 1 Foreigner

teacher, as well as information regarding the training course duration (10 consecutive days, 20 hours), and other related topics to uphold human research ethics. The first Thai lecturer had 20 years of teaching experience, and especially got the award of honor in teaching at SILK conference in the year of 2014. She received a Ph. D. in Languages and Linguistics at the University of Malaya in the year of 2024. Her English proficiency-CEFR level is C1. The second Thai lecturer had 3 years of teaching experience and got the best paper presentation at the conference in the year of 2023. He received a master degree in Linguistics at Mahidol University. His English proficiency-CEFR level is B2. For 1 foreigner teacher, he had 15 years of teaching experience. He received a bachelor degree in informatics at the University of South Africa and his English proficiency-CEFR level is C2. Following the orientation, all participants took pre-test before the instruction.

5.4.2 After the participants took the pre-test, they were taught for 20 hours (2 hours for each day) about listening, reading, conversation, and vocabulary and grammar based on CEFR from A1 – B1 level. Communication Language Teaching (CLT) approach was used to teach vocabulary and conversation, including listening part. Grammar Translation method was used to teach grammar. Reading comprehension technique was used to teach reading part. In every class, the participants were taught to listen to conversations and were introduced listening comprehension technique before doing multiple choice questions. For vocabulary and conversation part, the participants were introduced vocabularies and then chose the correct answers to complete the short conversation and chose the correct words to complete sentences. For listening and vocabulary and conversation part, role-play, discussion, game, and pair work activities under CLT approach were used. For reading, they were taught to read passages using reading comprehension strategy such as predicting, questioning, and summarizing.

After that, they had to do the drill using true or false and multiple choice questions. For grammar part, they were taught grammar rules and sentence structures before doing multiple choice questions. Every class, face-to-face communication was used and the participants were able to ask any questions with each lecturer. This way of teaching can reinforce the knowledge they gained while studying with each lecturer. Their English proficiency based on CEFR can be improved.

5.4.3 After the completion of 20-hour English training course, all participants took the post-test. The participants' mean scores of pre and post-test were statistically compared using a computer program.

5.5 Data analysis

Descriptive statistics were used to analyze general information from the questionnaire to find mean, percentages and standard deviation. Dependent samples *t*-test analysis was used to compare participants' pre-test and post-test English scores.

6. Results

6.1 General Information

30 Questionnaires (100 %) were returned and analyzed using a computer program. The demographic breakdown of the respondents is as follows: 19 female (63.33%) and 11 male (36.67%). The majority fell between 30 to 50 years old with a minority being above 50 years old. Educational attainment: 26 respondents held master degree, 4 respondents had doctoral degree. Academic majors: The majority were in the general education major (9 respondents), technology major (9 respondents), Thai traditional medicine major (6 respondents), and science major (6 respondents). SPEEX online program scores: Latest English scores were between A1 to B1. A1 CEFR

level was a majority group of participants (15), followed by A2 level (8) and B1 level (7). Experience in English training and seminars: Only 5 out of 30 respondents (16.66%) had prior experience. The topics of these training courses or seminars included: 1) Professional English for Business, 2) RUTS Most Common Problems in Learning English and How to Improve Your English Skills, 3) Teaching English Grammar for Communication, 4) English TOEIC, 5) English Speaking and Listening, 6) How to Write English Cover Letter, 7) English translation into English and Thai, 8) English preparation for CEFR test, 9) English for boxing judge, and 10) Extensive reading and principles of learning. These findings did not affect sample selection.

6.2 Results comparing participants' CEFR English scores between before and after English training course

The participants' CEFR English scores from the pre-test and post-test were analyzed. The paired samples *t*-test (Dependent Samples) was employed to find out whether there were any significant differences in the 30 participants' English scores based on CEFR. As illustrated in Table 3 below, the overall results show that there was a significant difference ($p < .05$) in the means of CEFR English scores between pre-test ($\bar{x} = 16.00$, S.D. = 5.04) and post-test ($\bar{x} = 37.13$, S.D. = 4.46) after the substantial improvement in participants' performance, suggesting that the English learning lessons based on CEFR enhanced their proficiency. Upon closer examination of scores for each skill, the means and S.D. were calculated.

Table 3 CEFR English score comparing pre-test and post-test (n = 30)

Pre-test (n = 30)		Post-test (n = 30)		Mean Difference	t-values	P-values
\bar{x}	S.D.	\bar{x}	S.D.			
16.00	5.04	37.13	4.46	29.00	-18.09	.05**

** Significant at 0.05 level ($P < .05$)

The paired samples t-test (Dependent Samples) was performed to assess the differences between the means and S.D. in the pre-test and post-test of each skill (Table 2). Table 4 below shows that there was a significant difference between the pre-test and post-test for all four skills. For Vocabulary and Conversation, a significant difference was found between the pre-test ($\bar{x} = 9.53$, S.D. = 3.68) and post-test ($\bar{x} = 17.13$, S.D. = 1.50) scores from the total score (20). For Reading, there was a significant difference between the pre-test ($\bar{x} = 3.26$, S.D. = 1.62) and post-test ($\bar{x} = 7.93$, S.D. = 1.62) scores from the total score (11). For Listening, the pre-test score ($\bar{x} = 0.23$, S.D. = 0.57) was significantly different from the post-test score ($\bar{x} = 5.76$, S.D. = 2.62). It also found a significant difference between the pre-test score ($\bar{x} = 2.96$, S.D. = 1.52) and the post-test score ($\bar{x} = 6.30$, S.D. = 1.78) for grammar.

Table 4 CEFR English score comparing pre-test and post-test for 4 skills (Vocabulary and Conversation, Reading, Listening, and Grammar) (n = 30)

Skill (Total Score)	Pre-test		Post-test		t-test
	\bar{x}	S.D.	\bar{x}	S.D.	
Vocabulary and Conversation (20)	9.53	3.68	17.13	1.50	-12.32
Reading (11)	3.26	1.62	7.93	1.62	-10.86
Listening (10)	0.23	0.57	5.76	2.62	-11.39
Grammar (9)	2.96	1.52	6.30	1.78	-8.06

As shown in Table 5 below, there was a significant difference between the pre-test and post-test English scores based on CEFR levels for Vocabulary and Conversation skill. This indicated that the participants' English proficiency based on CEFR levels (A1, A2, and B1) improved. For A1 level, from the total scores (12), the participants' post-test score ($\bar{x} = 10.97$, S.D. = 1.13) obviously increased in comparison to their pre-test score ($\bar{x} = 5.50$, S.D. = 2.89). For CEFR A2 level, there was a significant difference between the pre-test ($\bar{x} = 2.37$, S.D. = 0.81) and post-test ($\bar{x} = 2.83$, S.D. = 0.46) scores from the total score (4). Additionally, at the CEFR B1 level, the post-test score ($\bar{x} = 3.40$, S.D. = 0.62) was significantly higher than the pre-test score ($\bar{x} = 1.57$, S.D. = 1.28).

Table 5 English score based on CEFR levels comparing pre-test and post-test for Vocabulary and Conversation skill (n = 30)

Vocabulary and Conversation Skill (Total Score = 20)	Pre-test		Post-test		t-test
	\bar{x}	S.D.	\bar{x}	S.D.	
A1 (12) (items 4, 6 – 13, 16 – 17, 20)	5.50	2.89	10.97	1.13	-10.46
A2 (4) (items 2, 3, 5, 15)	2.37	0.81	2.83	0.46	-2.63
B1 (4) (items 1, 14, 18, 19)	1.57	1.28	3.40	0.62	-7.22

Table 6 below illustrates a significant difference between the pre-test and post-test English scores based on CEFR levels for Reading skill. This difference specified the improvement in the participants' English reading proficiency based on CEFR levels (A1 and A2). CEFR B1 level was not included in the reading part. Pertaining to CEFR A1 level, the post-test score (\bar{x} = 3.93, S.D. = 1.14) was significantly better than the pre-test score (\bar{x} = 2.20, S.D. = 1.16). A significant difference between the pre-test score (\bar{x} = 1.17, S.D. = 0.99) and the post-test score (\bar{x} = 4.13, S.D. = 0.94) at the CEFR A2 level was also found.

Table 6 English score based on CEFR levels comparing pre-test and post-test for Reading skill (n = 30)

Reading Skill (Total Score = 11)	Pre-test		Post-test		t-test
	\bar{x}	S.D.	\bar{x}	S.D.	
A1 (6) (items 26 – 31)	2.20	1.16	3.93	1.14	-7.24
A2 (5) (items 21 – 25)	1.17	0.99	4.13	0.94	-11.21

Table 7 below demonstrates that there was a significant difference between the pre-test and post-test English scores based on CEFR levels for Listening skill. A significant difference was found between the pre-test ($\bar{x} = 0.03$, S.D. = 0.18) and post-test ($\bar{x} = 5.70$, S.D. = 2.56) scores from the total score (10) at the CEFR B1 level. It revealed that the participants' English listening proficiency based on CEFR level improved. CEFR A1 and A2 level were not included in the listening part.

Table 7 English score based on CEFR levels comparing pre-test and post-test for Listening skill (n = 30)

Listening Skill (Total Score = 10)	Pre-test		Post-test		t-test
	x	S.D.	x	S.D.	
B1 (10) (items 32 – 41)	0.03	0.18	5.70	2.56	-12.17

Table 8 below shows a significant difference between the pre-test and post-test English scores based on CEFR levels for Grammar skill. CEFR A1 level was not included in the grammar part. A significant difference was observed between the pre-test ($\bar{x} = 2.23$, S.D. = 1.33) and post-test ($\bar{x} = 5.40$, S.D. = 1.50) scores from the total score (7) in CEFR B1 level. On the contrary, the results in CEFR A2 level indicated a non-significant difference between the pre-test ($\bar{x} = 0.90$, S.D. = 0.66) and post-test ($\bar{x} = 0.83$, S.D. = 0.75) scores. This suggests that the participants' English proficiency in grammar improved only at the CEFR B1 level while their English proficiency at the CEFR A2 level did not show any development.

Table 8 English score based on CEFR levels comparing pre-test and post-test for Grammar skill (n = 30)

Grammar Skill (Total Score = 9)	Pre-test		Post-test		t-test
	x	S.D.	x	S.D.	
A2 (2) (items 42, 49)	0.90	0.66	0.83	0.75	0.35
B1 (7) (items 43 – 48, 50)	2.23	1.33	5.40	1.50	-10.56

7. Discussion

Upon analyzing the overall findings, it is evident that participants who attended the English training course demonstrated an improvement in their CEFR English scores. During the training course (20 hours), Communication Language Teaching (CLT) approach was used to teach vocabulary and conversation, including listening part. Grammar Translation method was used to teach grammar. Reading comprehension technique was used to teach reading part. It can be implied that the participants of the English training course were able to perform better in CEFR-based English tests. The overall results of this study align with the findings of Yodsri et al. (2023) who investigated the effect of English skills development based on the rules of professional competence with CEFR test for teachers in Surat Thani province. Similar to this study, Yodsri et al. (2023) found a significant increase in English scores after participating in an English seminar. Moreover, the findings are consistent with Chinasri's (2017) study on English grammar skills of college of Fine Arts students using English worksheets based on CEFR. Chinasri's study revealed an improvement in English grammar skills after learning from CEFR-based worksheets, supporting the idea that lessons or worksheets based on CEFR are crucial for enhancing English proficiency of both teachers and students. Examining the results for each skill, the means of the pre-test and

post-test for all four skills were significantly better which differs from the study of Abdaldaeim et al. (2017) study where reading skills scored the highest among lecturers, staff, and undergraduates from a university and school.

The current study identified Vocabulary and Conversation as the skill improved the most with the highest mean scores in both the pre-test (9.53) and post-test (17.13), while Listening improved the least (pre-test = 0.23, post-test = 5.76). The effect size of Vocabulary and Conversation part was very high (2.06). The discrepancy may be attributed to differences in participant demographics and the nature of the study. In our study, Listening was the weakest part comparing to the other 3 skills. This is consistent with Yodsri et al. (2023)'s findings indicating most primary and secondary teachers had a low level in listening skill. Even though New Policy for Education reform 2013 with 20-year national strategic plan 2017 - 2036 focuses on listening and speaking skills, both Thai teachers or lecturers as well as students are still at basic level in listening and speaking (Thairath Online, 2013). This may be attributed to the EFL (English as a Foreign Language) context in Thailand, where learning English is not as immersed as in English as a Second Language (ESL) countries. The lack of English learning techniques in listening skills among participants is also consistent with the findings of Marsaulina (2018), emphasizing the importance of addressing insufficient English language learning techniques in overcoming learning challenges.

As shown in Table 6, it was found that there was a non-significant difference between the pre-test and post-test scores for CEFR A2 level in the grammar part which means that their English proficiency at the CEFR A2 level was not improved. Grammar topics for items 42 and 49 at the CEFR A2 level included adjectives and adverbs. It can be implied that the use of adjectives and adverbs would be difficult for participants to understand clearly. In addition, it may be deduced that the Grammar Translation

method alone could not develop their grammar. It is in line with Moghadam and Adel (2011)'s findings showing that content-integrated learning together with linguistic skills enhanced English proficiency in all skills (speaking, listening, reading, and writing), including vocabulary and grammar. It is also in accordance with the findings of Phongploenpis (2023), which signifies that the content-based and task-based instruction approaches enriched both vocabulary and grammar skill.

Additionally, it is essential to engage in ongoing assessment and adjust teaching methods accordingly. By regularly reviewing the effectiveness of these approaches, educators can customize their instruction to address the varied needs of participants, helping them to develop their language skills and gain confidence in communication. This flexibility also contributes to a more inclusive learning atmosphere, accommodating diverse learning styles and preferences. In conclusion, this study's findings highlight the significance of combining content with linguistic skills in language teaching. This method not only enhances overall English proficiency but also prepares participants for successful communication in various contexts. As educational practices evolve, it is important to recognize the long-term benefits of such instructional approaches. Future research should investigate how these integrated methods can be adapted for different educational environments and diverse participant groups, ultimately promoting more effective and inclusive language learning experiences for all participants.

8. Conclusion and Implications

This study enhanced the university lecturers' English proficiency through a 20-hour English training course based on the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR). The participants, whose English proficiency was below B1 level based on CEFR, demonstrated significant improvement in general and across all four skills: vocabulary and conversation, reading, grammar, and listening. Notably, vocabulary and conversation skills exhibited the highest mean scores. However, it revealed that their English proficiency at the CEFR A2 level in grammar part was not improved. Therefore, it implies that Communication Language Teaching (CLT) approach and Reading comprehension technique applied in a 20-hour CEFR English training course can enhance lecturers' CEFR English proficiency at all levels. Furthermore, Grammar Translation method should be applied together with content-integrated learning in order to enhance participants' grammar knowledge. The findings underscore the importance of providing English training courses, seminars, or workshops with various English teaching techniques or approaches, especially content-based and task-based teaching and learning with linguistic skills.

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