Thai Students' Preferences Regarding the Personas of English Language Teachers

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Abstract

The way teachers act and perform in classrooms, which is called the "teacher persona", influences students' achievement. In order to promote students' learning progress and outcome, the study of teacher personas should not be overlooked. Thus, this study aimed to investigate the preferences of Thai students regarding the personas of English language teachers. Three hundred and four upper secondary students in a Thai public school participated using a stratified sampling technique. Ranking scale questionnaires with five persona categories and an open-ended question were administered. The findings showed that the most preferred aspect of teacher personas of all categories, according to the total score of the top five items, was classroom management. In addition, the other aspects in order of preference were method of evaluation, student-teacher relationship, teacher performance, and teacher personality, respectively. Another significant finding from the open-ended question was that Thai students stated a preference for teachers who understand their differences in terms of learning and individual personalities, which is considered to be part of the student-teacher relationship category. The findings suggest that teachers must be aware of their behavior and actions in class that could affect students' learning and achievement.

Keywords: preferences, teacher personas, English language teachers

Introduction

English has become essential for Thai students to succeed in an increasingly globalized world. Knowing English well and being able to communicate efficiently will help them in both their personal and professional achievements. As English has been a compulsory subject of the Thai educational system for many years, most Thai students have had to study English as a Foreign Language (EFL) since they were in primary and secondary school, as is the practice in many other non-English speaking countries. Thai students spend at least 12 years studying English in school. They must take three to five hours of English classes weekly and are taught by both Thai and foreign teachers. This compulsory course of study would be expected to provide a good outcome in terms of Thai students' English language learning. However, it turns out that Thais' level of English proficiency is relatively low in comparison with that of neighboring countries. The 2018 Test of English as a Foreign Language in an internet-based form (TOEFL iBT) showed that the international average score was 83 (out of 120), but the Thai average score was 78 (Educational Testing Service, 2019). It was lower than that of

other ASEAN countries such as Singapore, Malaysia, Indonesia, the Philippines, Vietnam, and Myanmar. This evidently reflects some degree of inefficiency or failure of English language teaching in Thailand.

Many researchers have pointed to a few main factors that have led to the failure of English language teaching and learning in Thailand, such as unqualified teachers, demotivated students, learners of mixed abilities in a single class, large class sizes, and less opportunity for students to use English outside the classroom (Noom-ura, 2013). According to Geringer (2003), the most important factor in students' learning progress is the teachers. Richards and Renandya (2002) additionally state that one of the most important factors in learning progress is the students' preferences regarding the different teaching styles that are used in classrooms. It is believed that teaching styles can be influenced by many factors e.g. the personality traits through which teachers assume a particular role, which can be identified as a teacher persona. Therefore, teacher personas are considered a primary factor that English language teachers should take into consideration in order to promote students' learning progress and outcome.

There have been extensive investigations by previous research works about effective characteristics or good personas of EFL teachers as perceived by students, for example, Jersild (1940), Shishavan and Sadeghi (2009), Deepa and Manisha (2014), Laru-An and Aurora (2014), Wadsorn (2017), and Chen (2010). However, the perceptions of the students from different backgrounds regarding EFL teachers may vary in different learning settings. In addition, students' preferences regarding EFL teacher personas have scarcely been examined, particularly in a Thai context. To help eliminate these gaps, it is useful to investigate Thai students' preferences regarding the personas of English language teachers. The findings of this study could help EFL teachers to reflect on their personas and consider some adjustments in preparation for their classroom teaching. Additionally, this study would be significant as it could lead to better outcomes among Thai EFL learners, particularly upper secondary school students who are in the most crucial period of study before entering tertiary education and are expected to lay the foundations for lifelong learning and human development.

Review of Literature

Teacher Persona

Teaching is a performing art. Teachers, as the main source of input to students, play their assigned role in class. The way teachers behave and their performance when engaged in the teaching process, which is called the "*teacher persona*", influences their teaching and students' learning. For this reason, the teacher persona in a classroom setting merits study.

The term "persona" (pərˈsōnə; plural noun: personae, or personas) was coined by Swiss psychiatrist Carl Jung. Persona, in psychology, "is the personality that an individual presents to others, as differentiated from the authentic self. It is the social face the individual presents to the world" (Jung, 1953, p. 5). The persona enables an individual to interrelate with the surrounding environment by reflecting the role in life that the individual is playing.

Though persona may be influenced by personality, it is different from personality as the personality of an individual is the specific set of qualities and interests that distinguish one person from another. Holzman (1969, p.200) distinguishes personality from persona as follows:

> Personality is a characteristic way of thinking, feeling, and behaving. Personality embraces moods, attitudes, and opinions and is most clearly expressed in interactions with other people, while persona is the aspect of someone's character that is presented to or perceived by others which differs from situation to situation and can be determined by surroundings.

Blumer (1969) states that we adopt roles and define ourselves depending on our understanding of and response to situations; thus, as applied to teaching, describing one's persona helps others understand how the teacher views the act of teaching. This view of social communication, which includes features such as speech, language, clothing, and gestures (Brissett & Edgley, 1990), provides the basis for the idea that teachers present a persona or play an onstage role in their classrooms. Especially in secondary classes, content and subject matter knowledge are important in shaping how teachers think of themselves and forming their identities (Beijaard, Verloop, & Vermunt, 2000; Day, Kington, Stobart, & Stammons, 2006 as cited in Davis, 2012).

Previous Studies of Teacher Personas

Most research studies that have been conducted in this area are about the teachers' personalities and characteristics as perceived by students and the teachers themselves, as well as the perceived qualities of an effective teacher as viewed by both groups.

Jersild (1940) examined the characteristics of teachers who are "liked best" and of teachers who are "liked least" or "disliked most". The researcher collected data from two major sources: reports written by 137 adults, who were asked to look back upon their elementary school years; and written and oral reports submitted by 899 students from grade 1 to 12 about the characteristics of the teachers whom they liked best and disliked most. The findings revealed that the characteristics of the teachers whom they liked and disliked, as selected by adults, were qualities such as kindliness, liking for others, vivacity, sense of humor, physical appearance, dress, and grooming. On the other hand, the teachers' performance and teaching methods were mentioned more often by students, such as the teachers' ability to make things interesting and clear, helping the pupils to learn, and participating in pupils' activities.

Shishavan and Sadeghi (2009) investigated the qualities of an effective English language teacher (EELT) as perceived by Iranian English language teachers and learners. The data was collected both quantitatively and qualitatively from 59 English language teachers and 215 learners of English at universities, high schools and language institutes in Iran using a questionnaire and open-ended questions. The results indicated that teachers seemed to agree more strongly than students that an EELT should assign homework and integrate group activities into the classroom. On the contrary, students agreed more than teachers that teaching English in Persian (first language of the learners) was one of their preferred characteristics of an EELT. In addition, the qualitative analysis showed that teachers perceived the qualities like mastery of the target language, good knowledge of pedagogy and the use of particular techniques and methods as aspects of a good teaching personality, whereas students focused more on characteristics related to the teachers' personality and how the teachers behave towards students in making them a preferred EELT.

Deepa and Manisha (2014) examined the issues related to effective learning by comparing student perceptions of instructor characteristics in a private school. The primary data was collected from 250 students of a private business school using a questionnaire. The survey asked for information about perceptions of importance for instructor characteristics

using a 5-point Likert scale, which ranged from not important (1) to very important (5). The results of the factor analysis applied in the study indicated that the six most vital factors for learning effectiveness from the students' perspective are: style of managing class, evaluation of student performance, facilitation, teaching style, communication skills and attitude.

Laru-An and Aurora (2014) studied the qualities of instructors preferred by the 611 college students in different schools at the West Visayas State University-Lambunao Campus (WVSU-LC), Lambunao, Iloilo, Philippines. The data of this study was gained from a 36-item questionnaire using a scale from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree) with consideration of personality traits, classroom management, instructional skills, methods of evaluation, and student-instructor relationship. The results of this study indicated that the most important qualities of instructors as viewed by students classified as to course and year level was the student-instructor relationship regarding their studies, while the least important quality was personality traits.

In relation to Thai contexts, Wadsorn (2017) conducted a preliminary study to investigate Thai tertiary students' perspectives, particularly with regard to the characteristics of a kind teacher, one of the desirable qualities in teachers they choose to study with. The data was gathered from 10 students using focus groups and written reflections. The findings revealed that kindness encompasses more than just empathy, care, and understanding. These qualities would shed light on teachers' roles, teacher-student relationships and student motivation in learning.

Finally, Chen (2010) explored the favorable and unfavorable characteristics of EFL teachers as perceived by Thai university students. Sixty undergraduate students participated in the study. The main instruments for data collection were open-ended questionnaires and semi-structured interviews. Useful information about EFL teachers' personality-related characteristics (i.e. emotion, kindness, fairness, lenience, and responsibility) and classroom teaching-related characteristics (i.e. lesson delivery, language used in teaching, classroom activities organization, and classroom atmosphere creation) emerged distinctly from the data.

In summary, most of the research consisted of surveys on the topic of teacher personas, which included the personalities and characteristics of the teachers as perceived by both students and the teachers themselves. The findings varied depending on the students' different backgrounds and learning settings. In addition, there were a few studies on the students' preferences regarding teacher personas. Accordingly, this paper furthers understanding of teacher-student relationships by investigating the teacher personas that Thai students preferred in order to answer the research question, "What personas of English language teachers are preferred by Thai EFL upper secondary school students?"

Methodology

Population

The population size of this study was 1,356 upper secondary students. The sample size (at least 300) was determined using Krejcie and Morgan (1970)'s sample calculation to represent the entire population. Since subpopulations within an overall population vary (in terms of educational level and class), it could be advantageous to sample each subpopulation (stratum) independently. Therefore, a stratified random sampling method was utilized to produce characteristics in the sample that are proportional to the overall population. The researchers selected proportional samples from each stratum in every educational level and class to ensure that there was uniform representation of the different groups. To clarify, the

researchers divided the population based on their educational levels (Matthayom 4-6, equivalent to grades 10-12) and each level had 12 classes. Then, approximately 8-9 students from each class were selected to be the participants for this study.

Participants

The total number of participants in this study was 304 students (82 males and 222 females) who are studying in Matthayom 4-6, or equivalent to grades 10-12, at a Thai public secondary school in Bangkok. Their mother tongue is the Thai language. All of them study English as a foreign language, and their English proficiency levels vary from low to high as evidenced by their respective grade point averages (GPAs) in the English subject. The participants have studied English for periods of time ranging from 7 to 15 years. In addition, the participants study in eight different programs, namely the Gifted program, Science-Math program, Math-English program, English-Chinese program, English-Japanese program, English-French program, General Arts program, and Gifted-Chinese program. Table 1 presents the participants' demographic information related to gender, student level, years of English study, GPA in English subject and study program.

Table 1
Participants' Demographic Information

	Frequency	Percentage
1.Gender		
Male	82	26.97
Female	222	73.03
Total	304	100.00
2. Student Level		
M.4 (Grade 10)	103	33.88
M.5 (Grade 11)	104	34.21
M.6 (Grade 12)	97	31.91
Total	304	100.00
3. Years of English Study		
7 years	2	0.66
8 years	4	1.32
9 years	6	1.97
10 years	26	8.55
11 years	31	10.20
12 years	80	26.32
13 years	66	21.71
14 years	58	19.08
15 years	31	10.20
Total	304	100.00
4. GPA in English Subject		
High (3.50-4.00)	136	44.74
Medium (2.50-3.49)	145	47.70
Low (0.00-2.49)	23	7.57
Total	304	100

5. Study Program		
Gifted (Science-Math)	67	22.04
Science-Math	80	26.32
Math-English	33	10.86
English-Chinese	38	12.50
English-Japanese	37	12.17
English-French	23	7.57
General Arts	19	6.25
Others (Gifted-Chinese)	7	2.30
Total	304	100.00

Instrument

The preferred teacher personas of Thai EFL upper secondary school students were examined using a questionnaire that was adapted from the studies by Jersild (1940) and Shishavan and Sadeghi (2009). It was related to teacher personalities and characteristics, and consisted of three parts. The first part of the questionnaire was for the participants' information such as gender, student level, years of English study, GPA in English subject and study program. The second part was the ranking scale questionnaire including five categories of teacher personas: teacher's personality, teaching performance, classroom management, methods of classroom evaluation and student-teacher relationship. Each category had about 6-12 responses that were to be ranked from 1 to 5 according to the participants' order of preference, where 1 is the most preferred. The third part contained an open-ended question regarding other teacher characteristics that students believe an English language teacher must possess, in addition to the characteristics that were presented in Part 2 (see Appendix).

The content of the questionnaire was validated by three colleagues. All of the validators have master degrees in the field of English language teaching and their teaching experience ranges from 8 to 25 years. One of the suggestions from the validators was editing the teaching performance category, which had too many items to respond to. Accordingly, it was modified into two subcategories: knowledge of language and knowledge of pedagogy. Moreover, there were some items which overlapped in meaning to some extent. Consequently, some items of each category were carefully examined and edited. For example, "Use visual aids for teaching" and "Use of illustrative materials" conveyed the same meaning. So, "Use visual aids for teaching" was chosen for the questionnaire. Then, the revised questionnaire was translated into Thai in order to avoid misunderstanding among the participants when completing it. The translated version was double-checked by another translation expert and piloted with a few students who shared the same characteristics as in the main study. These procedures were implemented so as to ensure the validity of the instrument before conducting the main study.

Procedures

The questionnaire was distributed to the participants (Mattayom 4-6, equivalent to grades 10-12) with assistance from other teacher colleagues during a semester time. All students were allowed to complete the questionnaire outside of class and were asked to return the complete questionnaire within a week or so. Out of a total of 312 questionnaires distributed among upper secondary school students, 304 questionnaires were returned.

Data Analysis

The ranking of the participants' preferences was ordered by the total scores for each item. The total scores came from the number of students who chose that item multiplied by the weight score from 0-5. In other words, the participants' most preferred item (which they rank as 1) has the largest weight (5 points), their least preferred choice (which they rank as 5) has a weight of 1, and the item that was not chosen got zero. Then, all the scores for each item were summarized in a total score. A grand total score for each category was also calculated. Descriptive statistics like percentage and ranking were used as a basis of interpretation. In addition, the responses to the open-ended question were analyzed qualitatively. This involved a process of coding and categorizing the written responses. An intercoder was also involved to crosscheck the qualitative responses so as to increase the reliability of the findings.

Results

The data was analyzed to examine the preferred teacher personas of Thai EFL upper secondary school students by division into five categories, or aspects, of teacher personas. The data is presented under two subtopics: the preferred English language teacher personas ranking scores of five categories, and the top five preferred English language teacher personas ranking scores of each category.

The Preferred English Language Teacher Personas Ranking Scores of Five Categories

To see an overall picture of Thai EFL upper secondary school students' preferred English language teacher personas, all five teacher persona categories – classroom management, methods of classroom evaluation, student-teacher relationship, teaching performance, and teacher's personality – were ranked from the highest to the lowest scores.

Table 2
The Preferred Teacher Personas Ranking Scores of Five Categories

Rank	Teacher Persona Categories	Grand total score (of top 5)	Percentage of ranking scores
1	Classroom management	4,325	56.91
2	Methods of classroom evaluation	4,039	53.14
3	Student-teacher relationship	3,962	52.13
4	Teacher performance	3,786	49.82
5	Teacher's personality	2,785	36.64

As shown in Table 2, among five categories comparing with the grand total score of top five teacher personas, the most preferred is the *classroom management* category with a score of 4,325. This could indicate that the participants were most aware of classroom management. Ranked second is *methods of classroom evaluation* with a score of 4,039 (53.14%). Following in third is *student-teacher relationship* with a score of 3,962 (52.13%), and fourth is *teacher performance* which is the teacher's knowledge of the language and pedagogy, with a score of 3,786 (49.82%). Lastly, the category of *teacher's personality* had the lowest preference among the students, with a score of 2,785 (36.64%).

The Top Five Preferred English Language Teacher Personas Ranking Scores of Each Category

In order to further investigate the preferred English language teacher personas in each category, Tables 3 to 7 present the total scores of each item and focus on only the top five items of each category (regardless of the varied numbers of items under each category).

Table 3
The Preferred Classroom Management Trait Ranking Scores

Rank	Sub-items	Rank 1 (n * 5)	Rank 2 (n * 4)	Rank 3 (n * 3)	Rank 4 (n * 2)	Rank 5 (n * 1)	Total
1	Manage the class time well	670 (62.09%)	244 (22.61%)	87 (8.06%)	58 (5.39%)	20 (1.85%)	1,079 (100%)
2	Be able to command class attention without shouting	405 (41.20%)	268 (27.26%)	168 (17.09%)	112 (11.40%)	30 (3.05%)	983 (100%)
3	Can maintain good discipline	150 (16.39%)	320 (34.97%)	249 (27.21%)	166 (18.14%)	30 (3.29%)	915 (100%)
4	Be able to handle problems in the classroom	215 (23.70%)	300 (33.08%)	222 (24.48%)	148 (16.32%)	22 (2.42%)	907 (100%)
5	Has definite seating arrangement	65 (14.74%)	52 (11.79%)	114 (25.85%)	76 (17.23%)	134 (30.39%)	441 (100%)

Grand total = 4,325 (56.91%)

From Table 3, the first-ranked trait, which is the most preferred of students in the **Classroom Management** category is *managing the class time well* with a total score of 1,079. Then, being *able to command class attention without shouting* is ranked second, with a score of 983. Next, students' third-ranked preference in this category is for teachers who *can maintain good discipline*, with a score of 915. Then, being *able to handle problems in the classroom* is ranked fourth with a score of 907. The fifth-ranked trait, with a score of 441, is the teacher's skills concerning a *definite seating arrangement* in order to manage the classroom.

Table 4
The Preferred Methods of Classroom Evaluation Trait Ranking Scores

Rank	Sub-items	Rank 1 (n * 5)	Rank 2 (n * 4)	Rank 3 (n * 3)	Rank 4 (n * 2)	Rank 5 (n * 1)	Total
1	Explain the basis of grading	540 (57.26%)	128 (13.57%)	141 (14.95%)	94 (9.97%)	40 (4.24%)	943 (100%)
2	Fair in giving grades	425 (45.16%)	248 (26.35%)	147 (15.62%)	98 (10.41%)	23 (2.44%)	941 (100%)

Rank	Sub-items	Rank 1 (n * 5)	Rank 2 (n * 4)	Rank 3 (n * 3)	Rank 4 (n * 2)	Rank 5 (n * 1)	Total
3	Give pointers to review before giving examination	240 (28.10%)	248 (29.04%)	180 (21.08%)	120 (14.05%)	66 (7.73%)	854 (100%)
4	Assess what students have learned reasonably	180 (26.39%)	248 (36.36%)	126 (18.48%)	84 (12.32%)	44 (6.45%)	682 (100%)
5	Check and return assignments and homework	85 (13.73%)	228 (36.83%)	153 (24.72%)	102 (16.48%)	51 (8.24%)	619 (100%)

Grand total = 4,039 (53.14%)

As shown in Table 4, for **Methods of Classroom Evaluation**, students mostly preferred teachers who *explain the basis of grading*, with a total score of 943. The second-ranked preference is for teachers who are *fair in giving grades,* with a score of 941. Third is *giving pointers to review before giving examination*, with a score of 854. Then, *assessing what students have learned reasonably* is ranked fourth, with a score of 682. The fifth-ranked preference in this category is for teachers who *check and return assignments and homework,* with a score of 619.

Table 5
The Preferred Student-Teacher Relationship Trait Ranking Scores

Rank	Sub-items	Rank 1 (n * 5)	Rank 2 (n * 4)	Rank 3 (n * 3)	Rank 4 (n * 2)	Rank 5 (n * 1)	Total
1	Get along well with students	760 (69.03%)	168 (15.26%)	87 (7.90%)	58 (5.27%)	28 (2.54%)	1101 (100%)
2	Do not discriminate between students, and treat them fairly	310 (35.76%)	368 (42.45%)	90 (10.38%)	60 (6.92%)	39 (4.50%)	867 (100%)
3	Pay attention to the students' needs and problems	240 (28.10%)	248 (29.04%)	180 (21.08%)	120 (14.05%)	66 (7.73%)	854 (100%)
4	Show interest in students (e.g. by remembering their names and their learning)	180 (26.39%)	248 (36.36%)	126 (18.48%)	84 (12.32%)	44 (6.45%)	681 (100%)
5	Be helpful to students inside and outside the classroom	85 (13.73%)	228 (36.83%)	153 (24.72%)	102 (16.48%)	51 (8.24%)	619 (100%)

Grand total = 3,962 (52.13%)

Table 5 shows that the most preferred trait of teachers in terms of the **Student-Teacher Relationship** category is that of teachers who can *get along well with students*

(score of 1011). The second-ranked preference is for teachers who *do not discriminate between students, and treat them fairly,* with a score of 867. Ranked third at a score of 854 is preference for teachers who *pay attention to the students' needs and problems*. Then, the teachers who *show interest in students by remembering their names and their learning* is the fourth-ranked preference at a score of 681. The fifth-ranked preference among the Thai students is for teachers who can *help them both inside and outside the classroom,* with a score of 619.

Table 6
The Preferred Teaching Performance Trait Ranking Scores

Rank	Sub-items	Rank 1 (n * 5)	Rank 2 (n * 4)	Rank 3 (n * 3)	Rank 4 (n * 2)	Rank 5 (n * 1)	Total
Knowledge of Pedagogy							
1	Use teaching aids for teaching	330 (38.78%)	296 (34.78%)	120 (14.10%)	80 (9.40%)	25 (2.94%)	851 (100%)
2	Prepare the lesson well	490 (62.50%)	172 (21.94%)	57 (7.27%)	38 (4.85%)	27 (3.44%)	784 (100%)
3	Explain the lesson well	325 (42.71%)	260 (34.17%)	84 (11.04%)	56 (7.35%)	36 (4.73%)	761 (100%)
Knowledge of Language							
4	Pronounce English well	200 (28.13%)	208 (29.25%)	159 (22.36%)	106 (14.91%)	38 (5.35%)	711 (100%)
5	Be master of the subject matter (English language)	260 (38.29%)	188 (27.69%)	117 (17.23%)	78 (11.49%)	36 (5.30%)	679 (100%)

Grand total = 3,786 (49.82%)

As shown in Table 6, ***Teacher Performance*** can be divided into two subcategories: Teacher's Knowledge of Pedagogy and Teacher's Knowledge of Language. The findings indicate that the most preferred action by the students for **Teacher's Knowledge of Pedagogy** is *using teaching aids for teaching*, with its highest total score of 851. The second-ranked preference is *preparing the lesson well,* with a score of 784. The students' third-ranked preference is for teachers who *explain the lesson well,* with a score of 761. Ranked fourth and fifth are traits in the subcategory of **Teacher's Knowledge of Language**, which are *pronounce English well*, with a score of 711; and being a *master of the subject matter,* in this case the English language, with a score of 679.

Table 7
The Preferred Teacher's Personality Trait Ranking Scores

Rank	Sub-items	Rank 1 (n * 5)	Rank 2 (n * 4)	Rank 3 (n * 3)	Rank 4 (n * 2)	Rank 5 (n * 1)	Total
1	Be kind and friendly	585 (67.79%)	136 (15.76%)	72 (8.34%)	48 (5.56%)	22 (2.55%)	863 (100%)
2	Be approachable	125 (22.41%)	184 (32.97%)	126 (22.58%)	84 (15.05%)	39 (6.99%)	558 (100%)

3	Has a good sense of humor	165 (30.96%)	204 (38.27%)	84 (15.76%)	56 (10.51%)	24 (4.50%)	533 (100%)
4	Be flexible with students	130 (28.76%)	88 (19.47%)	126 (27.88%)	84 (18.58%)	24 (5.31%)	452 (100%)
5	Be good-tempered	90 (23.75%)	136 (35.88%)	75 (19.79%)	50 (13.19%)	28 (7.39%)	379 (100%)

Grand total = 2,785 (36.64%)

Table 7 shows that *being kind and friendly* is the most-preferred trait among the Thai students in the category of **Teacher's Personality**, with a score of 863. Ranked second is to *be approachable* (score of 558). The teacher trait of *having a good sense of humor* is ranked third, with a score of 533. Moreover, teachers who can *be flexible with students* display the fourth-ranked student preference, with a score of 452. The fifth-ranked preference in this category is for teachers who *are good-tempered,* with a score of 379.

Open-ended Responses

An additional open-ended question was used to gather more data on teacher personas which might affect the students' learning. It asked about the characteristics that students believe an English language teacher, regardless of their nationality, must possess in addition to the characteristics mentioned in the ranking section. The majority of the students stated that an English language teacher should *understand the differences among the students*, in particular their different learning styles and personalities. So, this response can be regarded as an aspect of teacher personas in the student-teacher relationship category. Additionally, for this category of teacher persona, some students also mentioned that they preferred the teachers who *care about the students' needs,* as quoted below:

> *"I prefer the teacher who understands the nature of students because there are many students in one class and they are different. It is the teacher's job to try to deal with those differences in terms of teaching and taking care of students."*
>
> (Student A)

> *"I like the teacher who always asks students about their needs in learning, and does not just give commands or let the students do only what the teacher wants students to do, but allows students to share ideas about the lesson and what is going on in the class."*
>
> (Student B)

The teacher's knowledge of language and teacher's knowledge of pedagogy were also prominently referenced in this part. The students preferred teachers who teach what can be used in daily life (vocabulary, informal language, and culture of the English speaking countries), use various techniques in order to account for students' differences, and emphasize the use of language to communicate more than simply teaching for an exam, as mentioned below:

"I like the teacher who can create the lesson variously by integrating useful activities which can be used in everyday life".

(Student C)

"When I watched soundtrack movies, the actors didn't say or use formal language, but most of the sentences are informal. There are many informal speeches, dialects or even slang words. So, the lesson would be more interesting if the teacher adds some kinds of these topics in the lesson."

(Student D)

The students also shared many comments which were similar to the high-ranked preferences in the ranking part: being friendly, being reasonable, explaining the lesson well, and being a master of the English subject. So, these findings could further confirm Thai students' preferences regarding English language teacher personas.

Discussion and Implications

Based on the findings of this study, five key aspects in relation to the preferences of Thai upper secondary students for English language teacher personas will be discussed. Some pedagogical implications towards each aspect will also be incorporated in this section.

With regard to *classroom management* as the most preferred aspect among the five categories, Thai students showed a preference for teachers who can manage class time well, maintain good discipline in class without shouting, and adequately handle classroom problems. It could be said that these elements of classroom management including routines, rules and discipline can pave the way for the teachers to engage the students in learning in an organized classroom environment. Classroom management involves teachers' dynamic decision-making about students' learning, and their emotionally-mediated reactions towards disruptive situations which result in successful or unsuccessful teaching and learning in the classroom, as suggested by Sánchez-Solarte (2019). If the classroom is managed in a disorganized way, students do not know what to do, so they might go off tasks or cause disruptions and even misbehave, which could result in their failure to learn. The result of this study is in line with the study of Deepa and Manisha (2014), who examined student perceptions towards instructor characteristics in a private school. It showed that the teacher's style of classroom management was perceived to be the most vital factor in their effective learning. In addition, the study of Fowler and Sarapli (2010) revealed that ELT students at the university level perceived that classroom management is just as important to students as it is to teachers. Students had high expectations of their teacher to be on time for class and to begin classes as scheduled.

Based on these findings, some pedagogical implications regarding effective classroom management strategies are suggested. For example, Sánchez-Solarte (2019) proposed some practical classroom management strategies to control the classroom with regard to three dimensions: the teacher, the planning and the environment. Furthermore, Smith (2016) recommended that teachers give comments which express approval and praise for students' appropriate behavior. If the students finish the assigned task, the teachers should allow them to engage in their preferred activities, such as games and free computer time. Conroy, Sutherland, Snyder, Al-Hendawi, and Vo (2009) also suggested that teachers regularly use praise to increase the occurrence of their students' positive social and academic behaviors. This strategy could help maintain good discipline and avoid the

problems caused by students' unwanted classroom behaviors. Moreover, teachers can teach students appropriate behaviors by establishing classroom routines, modeling desired behaviors, and building reinforcement aimed at displaying positive behaviors, as suggested by Chitiyo and Wheeler (2009). It is believed that when the students have regularly learned the appropriate behaviors, the teacher can effectively maintain those good behaviors (Sieberer-Nagler, 2016). Thus there would be no need to command the students' attention by shouting, and the teacher would not have to worry about classroom problems stemming from students' misbehavior.

Regarding the *methods of classroom evaluation* as the second most-preferred category of English teacher personas, Thai students preferred teachers who accurately evaluate their learning outcomes by clearly explaining the basis of grading, as well as giving grades fairly and reasonably. Reviewing before an examination takes place and returning students' homework or assignments are also their preferred methods of evaluation. From these findings, it can be said that Thai students pay attention to classroom evaluation methods which subsequently reflect their degree of learning success and impact their academic achievement in the form of grades. In addition, for Thai upper secondary students in particular, grades are considered essential when getting into colleges or universities because they are one of the evidences that shows the students' academic mastery and in turn impacts their further education. The result of this study is also in accordance with the study of Deepa and Manisha (2014), who examined student perceptions towards instructor characteristics in a private school. It showed that evaluation of student performance was the second most vital factor in students' learning effectiveness.

It is believed that effective grading provides accurate information to students about their performance and also helps them understand what they can improve on (University of Nebraska-Lincoln, Office of Graduate Studies, 2017). This idea implies that there are some pedagogical aspects regarding methods of classroom evaluation that teachers should be aware of. It is therefore important for the teachers to clearly explain to students how the course or English subject will be graded, to use clear criteria for giving students grades, as well as providing reasonable feedback on the students' work or assignments in order to help the students assess their performance and improve their learning more effectively.

In regard to the *student-teacher relationship* as the third most-preferred category of teacher personas, Thai students favored the teachers who can get along well with them, treat them fairly, pay attention to their needs and problems, show interest in them, and help them both inside and outside the classroom. Moreover, the answers to the open-ended question most commonly expressed the students' preference for teachers who understand the differences of the students and care about the students' needs, which helped confirm the importance of this category. This could be explained as reflecting that we all want to feel loved and cared for, including students. They might think that they work better in class if they feel that their teacher values and cares for them. The popularity of this sentiment may come from the fact that most Thai students are teacher-dependent (Adamson, 2003). Furthermore, in Thailand the relationship between Thai English teachers and students seems to be a close one, since many teachers devote themselves to their jobs and help their students solve problems both inside and outside the classroom. This study concurs with the study of Laru-An and Aurora (2014), who investigated the qualities of instructors preferred by college students. It revealed that the most-preferred qualities of instructors were related to the student-instructor relationship, which included getting along well with others as well as understanding the students by accepting students as they are and attending to the students' needs and problems.

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Interestingly, Arthur, Gordon, and Butterfield (2003) explained that positive teacher-student interaction has a crucial role in effective teaching and learning. Hamre and Pianta (2001) also stated that when teachers form positive bonds with students, classrooms become supportive spaces in which students can engage in academically and socially productive ways. In addition, there is an association between academic improvement and positive teacher-student relationship. Students who have a positive relationship with their teacher are motivated to be more engaged in school and to improve their academic achievement (Hughes, Cavell, & Willson, 2001). Therefore, teachers need to build good relationships with students starting with the very first lesson. In addition, teachers should make classroom environments more helpful in meeting students' developmental, emotional and educational needs, so that students can get along with the teacher and each other as well. Moreover, teachers should treat students as they would their own children, without discrimination on the grounds of English proficiency, academic performance or social status.

The Thai students' fourth-ranked aspect of teacher persona, which is *teacher performance*, consists of the teacher's knowledge of pedagogy (use of teaching aids, preparing and explaining the lesson well), and teacher's knowledge of language (good pronunciation of English, and mastery of the English subject). In other words, teacher performance is about their on-the-job performance, including what they do in the classroom, how much knowledge they have, and how they prepare to teach. Their performance in the class can significantly influence the students' learning outcome. To become an effective English language teacher, Shishavan and Sadeghi (2009) said that teachers should possess a mastery of the target language and good knowledge of pedagogy, and use particular techniques and methods as well as integrating group activities in the classroom.

Concerning *teacher's personality*, the fifth-ranked aspect of teacher persona among the Thai students, preference for teachers who are kind and friendly, have a good sense of humor, are flexible with them, and are even-tempered. The students' preference for such personal traits among teachers is exactly in line with Chen (2012)'s study, which reported similar favorable characteristics of EFL teachers as perceived by Thai undergraduate students. In addition, the finding follows the study of Kise (2008), who indicated that the teacher's personality is a crucial variable in attitude formation, and thus the teacher is the primary change agent in affecting the learning environment. It is believed that the teacher's personality is a factor that influences the teaching and students' learning, as teachers have a fundamental role in their learners' academic achievement, and the quality of their teaching can highly influence the students' outcomes (Rockoff, 2004). This is supported by the study of Ali (2009), who observed that there was a statistically significant relationship between teachers' characteristics and students' academic achievement. Therefore, teachers who wish to maximize their students' English language learning achievement, whether in Thailand or elsewhere, should be aware of the persona they assume in their role as a teacher.

Limitations of the Study

Since this study was designed as a survey to answer the "what" (personas) question in relation to students' preference, the data was collected by means of a solely quantitative method using ranked response questionnaires. As a result, only limited information could be obtained, based on the choices presented to the student respondents by the researchers. Even though the last part of the questionnaire included an open-ended question about the characteristics that students believe an EFL teacher must possess apart from the characteristics mentioned in the ranking part, the responses given were still limited and

somewhat overlapped with the existing choices. In addition, this study focused on the preferences of a particular group of Thai upper secondary students. Their preferred EFL teacher personas could be different from those that are preferred in other learning settings.

Recommendations for Future Research Studies

Any future research studies in this topic should have a larger sample size or more participants for better generalization. A qualitative method to collect data – for example, interviews, focus groups, and classroom observations – is also suggested to gain clearer explanations from the participants as well as triangulating the findings. In addition, new target groups such as primary students and undergraduate students could be selected, and the preferred teacher personas of each category among different target groups could be compared and contrasted to gain more interesting information. Furthermore, a comparison of preferred teacher personas between public and private school students could be performed to obtain more insightful data regarding students of different economic strata. Lastly, more variables like teacher's nationality, age, gender, and teaching and learning style could be examined to gain a better understanding of whether or not such factors have an influence on students' preferred English teacher personas.

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APPENDIX
STUDENTS' PREFERENCES OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHER PERSONAS QUESTIONNAIRE

Part I: Personal Information

Please fill in the blank or check the appropriate space after the information asked for.

1. Gender: □Male □ Female
2. Student Level: □ M.4 □ M.5 □ M.6
3. Years of English Study: _____
4. GPA of English Subject: _____
5. Study Program: □ Gifted (Science-Math) □ Science-Math □ Math-English
   □ English-Chinese □ English-Japanese □ English-French
   □ General Arts □ Others …………………....

Part II: Your Preferences of English Language Teacher Personas

*Please rank the **top 5** of the following items for your preferences of English language teacher personas in each category by writing number 1 to 5, where 1 is the most preference of teacher personas.*

1) Teacher's Personality

____	Be kind and friendly	____	Be polite and respectful
____	Has a good sense of humor	____	Be easy-going
____	Be good-tempered	____	Be approachable
____	Has well-modulated voice	____	Be open-minded
____	Has a good personal appearance	____	Be flexible with students
____	Be neatly groomed	____	Be reasonable

2) Teaching Performance
2.1) Knowledge of Language

____	Teach English in English	____	Pronounce English well
____	Teach English in Thai	____	Speak English well
____	Be master of the subject matter (English language)	____	Understand spoken English well
____	Be fully familiar with English grammar	____	Know English culture well

2.2) Knowledge of Pedagogy

____	Prepare the lesson well	____	Use teaching aids for teaching
____	Explain the lesson well	____	Integrate technology in teaching
____	Use lesson plan	____	Integrate group activities to class
____	Follow syllabus tightly	____	Use particular methods and techniques in teaching
____	Make the lesson lively and interesting	____	Provide opportunities for students to use English through meaningful tasks and activities
____	Provide various activities that arouse student's interest in classroom		

3) Classroom Management

_____ Manage the class time well	_____	Has definite seating arrangement
_____ Can maintain good discipline	_____	Be able to handle problems in the classroom
_____ Be able to command class attention without shouting	_____	Does not allow students to go in and out while the lesson is going on

4) Methods of Classroom Evaluation

_____ Explain the basis of grading	_____	Fair in giving grades
_____ Check and return assignments and homework	_____	Check and return test papers
_____ Assess what students have learned reasonably	_____	Give pointers to review before giving examination

5) Student – Teacher Relationship

_____ Get along well with students	_____	Be helpful to students inside and outside the classroom
_____ Do not discriminate between students, and treat them fairly	_____	Be available for students for asking or discussion about the lesson
_____ Pay attention to the students' needs and problems	_____	Show interest in students (e.g. by remembering their names) and their learning

Part III: Other teacher characteristics

Please answer the following question.

Are there any particular characteristics that you believe an English language teacher must possess besides the characteristics that you preferred above? Please specify.

_____
_____
_____
_____

**** Thank you for your kind cooperation ****