

Developing English Proficiency Standards for English Language Teachers in Thailand*

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Abstract

This study aimed to develop English proficiency standards for English language teachers in Thailand which meet the needs of the stakeholders. The literature relevant to the standards of English language teachers in different countries was extensively reviewed. The Professional Qualification Framework designed by the Thailand Professional Qualification Institute (TPQI) was mapped and compared with the Common European Framework of Reference

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(CEFR). The three researchers and twenty-seven stakeholders, who were representatives of government and private organizations dealing with English language teachers, worked together in focus groups to develop the draft standards, which were revised by four experts from the Auckland University of Technology (AUT), who acted as international external auditors. The standards were discussed and commented upon by eighty professionals in a one-day professional seminar before being examined and unanimously approved by an endorsement board, which consisted of nine Thai experts, specialists and authorities in English language teaching and teachers. The result is that English proficiency standards for English language teachers in Thailand are divided into three levels of TPQI Professional Qualification Framework: Level 3, Level 4, and Level 5, each of which describes the attainment required in the four skills. The minimum requirement of English proficiency for English language teachers at Level 3 is equivalent to the B1 level of the CEFR.

Keywords: standards of English language teachers; English proficiency

การพัฒนามาตรฐานความสามารถภาษาอังกฤษ สำหรับผู้สอนภาษาอังกฤษในประเทศไทย*

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บทคัดย่อ

การศึกษาค้นคว้าครั้งนี้มีวัตถุประสงค์ในการพัฒนามาตรฐานความสามารถภาษาอังกฤษสำหรับผู้สอนภาษาอังกฤษในประเทศไทยที่ตอบสนองความต้องการของผู้มีส่วนได้เสีย ผู้วิจัยได้ทำการทบทวนวรรณกรรมที่เกี่ยวข้องกับมาตรฐานผู้สอนภาษาอังกฤษในประเทศต่างๆ อย่างละเอียด ศึกษากรอบคุณวุฒิแห่งชาติที่จัดทำขึ้นโดยสถาบันคุณวุฒิวิชาชีพ (TPQI) เพื่อวิเคราะห์และเปรียบเทียบกับกรอบอ้างอิงความสามารถทางภาษาของสหภาพยุโรป (CEFR) หลังจากนั้นผู้วิจัย

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3 คนและผู้มีส่วนได้เสีย 27 คนซึ่งเป็นตัวแทนจากหน่วยงานรัฐบาลและองค์กรเอกชนที่เกี่ยวข้องกับผู้สอนภาษาอังกฤษได้ทำงานร่วมกันด้วยการทำอภิปรายกลุ่มหลายครั้งเพื่อจัดทำมาตรฐานความสามารถภาษาอังกฤษฉบับร่าง ซึ่งได้รับการทบทวน แก้ไขจากผู้เชี่ยวชาญจาก Auckland University of Technology ในฐานะผู้ตรวจสอบภายนอกที่เป็นเจ้าของภาษา มาตรฐานฉบับร่างได้ผ่านการปรึกษาหารือจากผู้เชี่ยวชาญในอาชีพ จำนวน 80 คน ก่อนที่จะผ่านการตรวจสอบขั้นสุดท้ายจากคณะกรรมการมาตรฐานอาชีพซึ่งประกอบด้วยผู้ทรงคุณวุฒิ ผู้เชี่ยวชาญและผู้มีอำนาจเกี่ยวข้องกับการสอนและผู้สอนภาษาอังกฤษอย่างเป็นเอกฉันท์ ผลจากการศึกษาพบว่ามาตรฐานความสามารถภาษาอังกฤษของผู้สอนภาษาอังกฤษในประเทศไทย แบ่งได้ 3 ระดับตามกรอบคุณวุฒิแห่งชาติ อันได้แก่ ระดับ 3 ระดับ 4 และระดับ 5 โดยแต่ละระดับผู้สอนจะต้องมีทักษะภาษาอังกฤษ 4 ด้าน ผู้สอนภาษาอังกฤษต้องมีความสามารถภาษาอังกฤษอย่างน้อยระดับ 3 ซึ่งเทียบเท่ากับระดับ B1 ของกรอบอ้างอิงความสามารถทางภาษาของสหภาพยุโรป

คำสำคัญ: มาตรฐานผู้สอนภาษาอังกฤษ; ความสามารถภาษาอังกฤษ

1. Introduction

This article is a part of the project, *Developing Occupational Standards and Professional Qualifications for English Language Teachers in Thailand*, which was funded by the Thailand Professional Qualification Institute (TPQI), a public organization under the Office of the Prime Minister. The project was aimed to create occupational standards and assessment tools used to assess the professional qualifications of English language teachers in Thailand so as to meet the needs of the stakeholders. It also aimed to assure students and their parents that English language teachers who are endorsed by TPQI are internationally accepted, especially in the ASEAN community and to enhance the competitiveness of Thailand. The main project consists of two parts: developing occupational standards and assessment tools. Developing occupational standards was sub-categorized into English language proficiency standards and English teaching standards. However, the present study principally focuses on how English proficiency standards for English language teachers in Thailand were developed.

English is the most important foreign language in Thailand. It is also a compulsory subject which Thai students have to study at school. Some may start studying it as soon as they enter kindergarten, and many have to continue their studying English until they finish the tertiary level. Furthermore, English is a significant tool used in screening students for study at the university or higher levels, while in the job market, it is a factor considered by government and private organizations in selecting new employees. Since 2015, Thailand has been a part of the ASEAN Community. As stated in the ASEAN Charter, “the working language of ASEAN shall be English.” Therefore, English plays a more important role for Thai people as ASEAN citizens - that is, they have to acquire

enough English proficiency not only to study or to find a good job but also to communicate with other citizens of ASEAN.

Teachers play prominent roles in the learning and teaching process, and they are a key element in human resource development. Apart from teaching subject content to convey knowledge in class, teachers have to encourage and support their students to develop themselves to reach learning goals. Curriculums, reduced class size, funding, family and community involvement all contribute to school improvement and student achievement, but effective teachers are the most influential factor (Education Research Newsletter and Webinars, 2003). Therefore, as one way to improve teacher quality, different countries have developed occupational standards for their teachers.

In England, apart from essential values and behaviors that all teachers must demonstrate throughout their career, the teacher standards used for English schools comprise standards for teaching and standards for personal and professional conduct. The former are divided into eight competencies: setting high expectations; promoting good progress and outcomes by pupils; demonstrating good subject and curriculum knowledge; planning and teaching well structured lessons; adapting teaching to respond to the strengths and needs of all pupils; making accurate and productive use of assessment; managing behavior effectively to ensure a good and safe learning environment; and fulfilling wider professional responsibilities, whereas the latter are standards for personal and professional conduct composed of three competencies: teachers' upholding public trust; teachers' proper and professional regard for the ethos, policies and practices of the school; and teachers' understanding of, and always acting within, the statutory frameworks (Department of Education, 2011).

In the United States, the framework of the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards (NBPTS) has five core propositions to serve as the foundation for all National Board standards and assessments. These include that teachers are committed to students and their learning; that they know the subjects they teach and how to teach those subjects; and that they are members of learning communities who are responsible for managing and monitoring student learning, think systematically about their practice and learn from experience (NBPTS, 2010, pp. 5-7).

In Thailand, teachers in every subject should have three essential features to meet occupational standards: knowledge and teaching experience standards, operational standards and ethical standards (The Teachers' Council of Thailand, 2013 or 2556 B.E.). Previously, there were not as yet occupational standards for English language teachers. Most of the English language teachers in Thailand are non-native. Some may not hold a degree in teaching English as a foreign language. As a result, they may have limited competence in using the English language. According to a 2011 report of the Ministry of Education concerned with a strategic plan to be used to reform English learning in order to enhance the competitiveness of Thailand (2006-2010 or 2549-2553 B.E.), 51.91 percent of the primary-school teachers assessed their own English proficiency as low. This directly affects the improvement of English proficiency of Thai students and the Thai people, as well. Thus, the present study was intended to develop English proficiency standards for English language teachers in Thailand on the basis of the TPQI Professional Qualification Framework, providing a framework of English language competencies, namely English language knowledge, skills and abilities that English language teachers should have. This will be helpful in improving the quality of English language teachers, and also in guaranteeing the quality of the learning and teaching English, which will certainly lead to improving students' achievement in using

English, assist educational institutions in producing qualified teacher graduates that meet the requirements of the stakeholders and serve as a guide for professional development.

2. Literature Review

2.1 English Proficiency Standard of English Language Teachers in Different Countries

Occupational standards are statements of performance individuals must achieve when carrying out functions in the workplace, together with specifications of the underlying knowledge and understanding (UK Commission for Employment and Skill, 2014). They describe what a person in a particular occupation must know and be able to do to be considered “capable” in the occupation - that is, the level of skills and knowledge required to do their jobs effectively, safely, and properly (Child Care Human Resources Sector, 2010). TPQI (2014) defines occupational standards as the competency frameworks of an individual in making a living, where competency means how to use knowledge, skills and abilities to perform a job. Thus, occupational standards for English language teachers involve knowledge, skills and abilities required to effectively perform in a job as an English teacher. To develop and upgrade English language teachers, many countries in Europe, America, Australia, and Asia have implemented occupational standards for English language teachers as guidelines used to train pre-service teachers, to arrange professional development, and to assess professional qualifications of in-service teachers.

In England, apart from excellent standards of English language, the primary requirement the Teacher Training Agency (TTA) stipulates is that English language instructors possess a special training certificate such as Teaching English as a Foreign Language (TEFL), Certificate in English Language Teaching to Adults (CELTA), or Diploma in English Language Teaching to Adults (DELTA).

In America, several standards are used, but the following three standards are widely accepted. To start with, TESOL Incorporated (2003) created standards for teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL) accepted by National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE). The TESOL standards consist of five domains. The first domain is language, which can be categorized into two standards. One is the standard of describing language - that is, English language teachers show their understanding of language systems and a high level of competence in supporting students in acquiring and using English in listening, speaking, reading, and writing for social and academic purposes. The other standard is that of language acquisition and development, which means English language teachers understand and apply concepts, theories, research, and practice to facilitate the acquisition of a first and a new language in and out of the classroom setting. The performance criteria of TESOL standards can be divided into three levels: Approaches Standard, Meets Standard, and Exceeds Standard. Next, the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL, 2012) set out six content standards at-a-glance for foreign language teachers. The first is language proficiency in three modes: interpersonal, interpretive, and presentational. Foreign language teachers should show a high level of proficiency in the target languages they are teaching. They are able to communicate effectively in interpersonal, interpretive, and presentational contexts. The performance criteria of ACTFL in foreign languages including

the four skills can be separated into five major levels of proficiency: Distinguished, Superior, Advanced, Intermediate, and Novice. In addition, the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards, NBPTS (2010) has organized the standards for accomplished teachers of world languages into nine standards, the second of which is knowledge of language, stating English language proficiency consists in receptive and productive skills in both formal and informal situations and knowledge of how language works from the sound systems to the discourse level.

In Australia, a country with cultural diversity, the Australian Association for the Teaching of English (2002) established three standards for teachers of the English language and literacy. One of these concerns professional knowledge and states that English language teachers must demonstrate high performance in literacy and advanced English language proficiency. The Australian Council of TESOL Associations (2015) set out occupational standards for teachers who work with learners of English as an Additional Language or Dialect (EAL/D) covering the professional knowledge of the teachers including understanding the features of standard Australian English. The rubric used to grade the competence can be divided into Graduate, Proficient, Highly Accomplished, and Lead.

In Israel, the Ministry of Education (2003) developed professional standards for English language teachers focusing on five domains. The first domain describes the standard of language proficiency and awareness, stating that English language teachers must know how the English language is structured and functions contextually; show proficiency in oral, written, social and academic English; and serve as good language models for their learners.

In China, TESOL (2006) established TESOL Professional Standards consisting of eight domains. The fourth of these is knowledge of languages,

language learning, and critical thinking. This means that with their knowledge of language, English language teachers can guide students and themselves toward increasing proficiency in using English in the four skill areas (speaking, listening, reading and writing).

In Vietnam, Dudzik (2013) in her presentation on Influencing the Future of ELT in Vietnam: The English Teacher Competencies Framework (ETCF) showed a blueprint for English teacher competencies in Vietnam comprising five domains. Again, the first domain is the teachers' knowledge of language, language learning, and language content and curriculum. In this case, teachers of the English language needed to improve their English proficiency up to the B2 or C1 level (CEFR-based benchmarks).

Consequently, there is strong agreement that English proficiency is the first competence needed by effective English language teachers. Basically, to perform their duties well, they have to possess English language knowledge, skills and abilities such as comprehending texts accurately, providing good language models, using English fluently in the classroom, giving English explanations and instructions, providing examples of words and grammatical structures, giving accurate explanations (e.g., of vocabulary and language points), using appropriate classroom language, selecting English language resources (e.g., newspapers, magazines, the Internet), monitoring their own speech and writing for accuracy, giving correct feedback on learners' English language, and providing input at an appropriate level of difficulty (Richards, 2011, p. 3). Nevertheless, the assessment methods and tools used to measure English proficiency are different. Institutional rubrics, standardised tests or international benchmarks are accepted depending on the context of each country.

2.2 Introducing English Proficiency Standards for English Language Teachers in Thailand

This part proposes to review the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) and the TPQI Professional Qualification Framework because they are the conceptual frameworks used in developing the present English proficiency standards.

For the last decade, the government has been trying to improve the quality of English teaching and learning in Thailand. In 2013, the Ministry of Education announced a policy to reform English teaching (Office of the Basic Education Commission, 2014). The policy aims to upgrade educational standards and students' proficiency and particularly to elevate the ability of teachers and students in using English to communicate, search for knowledge and perform according to the demands of their professions or of acquiring further education. This policy lays down certain guidelines to reach its goals. One of them is to implement the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) as the main conceptual guideline for teaching and learning English in Thailand for use in designing courses, in developing teachers, and in teaching. A number of English teachers have been getting some first-hand experience of the CEFR as part of an initiative to assess the English language proficiency of all English language teachers. As a result, the CEFR is an important language standard framework accepted in teaching and learning English as a foreign language in Thailand.

The Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) is an internationally recognized language standard developed by the Council of Europe. The framework describes learners' foreign language proficiency in listening, speaking, reading and writing. It divides learners into

three levels, each of which consists of two sublevels: Basic (A1 and A2), Independent (B1 and B2) and Proficient (C1 and C2) (Council of Europe, 2001). The abilities for learners at each level are described as follows:

Proficient User	C2 Proficient	Can understand with ease virtually everything heard or read, summarize information from different spoken and written sources, and very fluently and precisely express him/ herself.
	C1 Advanced	Can understand a wide range of demanding, longer texts, and recognize implicit meaning, fluently and spontaneously express him/ herself, use language flexibly and effectively for different purposes and produce clear, well-structured, detailed text on complex subjects.
Independent User	B2 Upper Intermediate	Can understand the main ideas of complex text on both concrete and abstract topics, interact with a degree of fluency and spontaneity, and produce clear, detailed text on a wide range of subjects.
	B1 Intermediate	Can understand the main points of clear input on familiar matters, produce simple connected text on topics which are familiar or of personal interest, describe experiences and events, dreams, hopes & ambitions and briefly give reasons and explanations for opinions and plans.

Basic User	A2 Elementary	Can understand sentences and frequently used expressions, communicate in simple and routine tasks and describe in simple terms aspects of his/her background, immediate environment and matters in areas of immediate need.
	A1 Beginner	Can understand and use familiar everyday expressions and very basic phrases, introduce him/herself and others and can ask and answer questions about personal details and interact in a simple way provided the other person talks slowly and clearly and is prepared to help.

The Thai Ministry of Education has moved towards using the CEFR framework to evaluate English language proficiency and set targets for students: Grade 6 students should acquire an English proficiency of A1; Grade 9 students of A2; Grade 12 students of B1; and bachelor's degree graduates of B2. These targets for students imply that non-native English teachers should have higher English language proficiency in listening, speaking, reading and writing than the students in the particular level they are teaching have.

Established in 2001, TPQI has as its principal mission developing occupational standards and accrediting professionals in various occupations. In order to develop occupational standards in each occupation, TPQI compiles descriptions of requirements ranging from the most basic competency level to the highest level of expertise. The competency level is a measurement of a person's occupational, knowledge, skills, and abilities in carrying on the occupation. There are seven levels of professional qualification under the TPQI Professional Qualification Framework. A number of basic competencies for a

specific occupation make up level 1 of professional qualification, while a number of advanced competencies make up the highest level of professional qualification. The abilities for workers at each level are described as follows:

Level 7: Top Management, Novel and Original (Career Expert)

Level 6: Experienced Specialists and Senior Management (Experienced Specialist)

Level 5: Professionally Qualified and Mid-management (Expert)

Level 4: Supervisors, Foremen, Superintendents, Academically Qualified Workers, Junior Management (Specialist)

Level 3: Skilled Personnel/ Workers (Subject Expert)

Level 2: Semi-skilled Personnel/ Workers (Skilled Labour)

Level 1: Basic Skilled Personnel/ Workers (Basic Skilled Personnel)

In this study, five groups of English teaching professionals and experts applied the knowledge and information of the development of standards for English language teachers in different countries. They mapped the TPQI Professional Qualification Framework to that of the CEFR. They compared, analyzed, and carried on discussions in order to create English proficiency standards which are contextually appropriate for teaching and learning English in Thailand and meet the requirements of the stakeholders.

3. Methodology

This research project applied qualitative design, using focus groups as a data collection tool. Focus groups are group discussions exploring a specific set of issues designed to develop agreed professional principles (Kitzinger and Barbour, 1999, p. 4). Qualitative research was suitable for the

purpose of this research study because it is an inductive research strategy which builds concepts (Merriam, 1998, p. 7).

Five groups of English teaching professionals and experts were involved in this project. The first were the researchers who conducted this study; the second was personnel of government and private organizations dealing with English language teachers; the third was experts in English teaching from Auckland University of Technology (AUT), New Zealand; the fourth was eighty people drawn from government and private organizations who employ English teachers as well as Thai and foreign English teachers; and the fifth was an endorsement board composed of English teaching experts and authorities who were nominated by the Thailand Professional Qualifications Institute (TPQI), our sponsor. The details of each group's role were as follows.

The three researchers were experienced English language teachers at the university level for more than 20 years who had had experience in conducting qualitative research. The researchers reviewed the literature related to occupational standards for English teachers used in different countries such as England, America, Australia, Israel, China, and Vietnam. They also studied professional standards for Thai teachers of the Teachers' Council of Thailand and the policy to reform English language learning and teaching in Thailand of the Office of the Basic Education Commission, Ministry of Education. At the same time, they studied the TPQI Professional Qualification Framework, the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR), and the procedures for developing occupational standards designed by TPQI. Next, the researchers discussed, analyzed the data collected from the literature review and mapped the compatible competences of TPQI Framework with those of

CEFR. In addition, they prepared a first draft of the standards, consisting of three graded levels, to be considered in the focus groups.

The second group was stakeholders from the government and private organizations dealing with English language teachers. The role of this group of participants was to serve in peer debriefing (Creswell, 2009, p. 192). They reviewed, asked questions, gave comments and refined the standards prepared by the researchers. This group of participants helped to enhance the accuracy and validity of the standards prepared by the researchers so that the standards would resonate with other professionals (Creswell, 2009, p. 192). This process started with locating participants. The researchers applied a purposeful sampling strategy in order to select information-rich individuals from whom the researchers could learn a great deal (Merriam, 1998, p. 61) about the English proficiency standards for teachers of English in Thailand. To begin the purposeful sampling, the researchers determined the criteria for choosing participants (Merriam, 1998, p. 61). The criteria were as follows. The participants should be representatives of 1) government and private organizations dealing with English language teachers, 2) government and private secondary schools and tutorial schools, and 3) universities providing English teaching curricula and producing English language teachers. The researchers invited candidates who met the criteria by telephone and letter. Twenty-seven people accepted the invitation: eight from government and private organizations dealing with English language teachers, ten from government and private secondary schools and tutorial schools, and nine from universities providing English teaching curricula and producing English language teachers. The three groups of professionals who agreed to participate in the research project were invited to attend focus groups, which were carefully planned. The participants were randomly divided into two small groups of thirteen and fourteen people. The discussions in the focus groups were recorded. After each focus group, the

three researchers adjusted the standards in accord with the comments of the participants. The revised standards were brought back to the participants to check in the follow-up focus groups, and the participants were provided the opportunity to comment on the revised standards so as to enhance their validity (Merriam, 1998, p. 204). The focus groups were held a total of eight times.

The experts from Auckland University of Technology who acted as international external auditors (Creswell, 2009, p. 192) reviewed the standards. After the third and the sixth focus group, the researchers sent the revised standards to the experts by e-mail and discussed the standards with the experts via video teleconference (Skype). The procedure of having independent investigators look over the standards enhanced the overall validity (Creswell, 2009, p. 192). Then, the researchers brought back the comments from the experts to discuss in the focus groups to improve the standards.

In order to get comments on and acceptance of the standards from English teaching professionals, a one-day professional seminar was held before the step of endorsement. Eighty people attended the seminar: twenty-eight potential employers from government and private secondary schools, twenty-six Thai English language teachers from government and private secondary schools and language institutes, sixteen English language lecturers in universities and ten foreign teachers who taught English. This group acted as an external auditor at the national level. Their comments and criticism were video recorded. Then, the researchers used the comments from the seminar to improve the standards.

The Endorsement Board comprised nine experts, specialists and authorities in English language teaching from government and private sector organizations such as the English Language Institute, Organization of English Teachers in Thailand (Thai TESOL), and the Teachers' Council of Thailand.

The role of the endorsement board was to review the comments and criticism of the other four groups, and the most important role was to endorse the standards. The three researchers had to refine the standards in accordance with the board's comments until every member of the board agreed with the detailed standards. With this, the standards were endorsed.

4. Results

After working together in the different steps in developing the English proficiency standards for English language teachers in Thailand, the five groups of English teaching professionals and experts unanimously agreed that there should be three levels for English language teachers in Thailand: Level 3 (skilled personnel or subject experts), Level 4 (supervisor) and Level 5 (professionally qualified experts) according to the TPQI Professional Qualification Framework.

To develop the English Proficiency Standards, the English teaching profession was holistically considered and analyzed - which means that the five groups of English teaching professionals and experts took all of the teaching competencies into their consideration and analysis, not only English language competence. Nevertheless, in terms of English language proficiency, the five groups agreed that English language teachers in Thailand should have an English proficiency standard of at least Level 3 according to the TPQI Professional Qualification Framework. That is, English language teachers at this level must be skilled personnel or subject experts who possess teaching skills and techniques, thinking processes and various other skills and must be

able to solve technical problems by referring to guidelines and related information under the advice of their supervisor.

In addition, the five groups of English teaching professionals and experts agreed that English language teachers in Thailand need to acquire the four English language skills, namely listening, reading, speaking and writing. Therefore, each standard consists of 1) units of competence which are like the goals to be achieved at the level; 2) elements of competence including knowledge, skills, and abilities required to reach the goals, which are divided into five elements of four language skills; and 3) performance criteria showing how each element of competence can be concretely measured as follows:

Table 1

TPQI Professional Qualification Framework: English Proficiency Standards Level 3

Unit of Competence	Element of Competence	Performance Criteria
Use basic English for communication in familiar situations.	1. Listen to and identify the main points of spoken language concerned with familiar matters.	1.1 Listen to and comprehend the main points of clear standard conversations. 1.2 Listen to and understand simple spoken descriptions dealing with familiar matters. 1.3 Listen to news reports from audio media in which the delivery is relatively slow and clear and identify the main points. 1.4 Listen to and understand films in which the delivery is clear and straightforward and identify the main points of audio-visual media presentations on matters

Unit of Competence	Element of Competence	Performance Criteria
		of interest such as news, interviews, and short lectures when the delivery is relatively slow and clear.
	2. Read and identify the main points of texts on familiar matters.	2.1 Read and understand texts encountered in everyday life such as letters, brochures, and other short documents. 2.2 Read and identify the main ideas of articles on familiar matters and identify conclusions of arguments presented through different media.
	3. Speak and take part in oral interactions in familiar contexts.	3.1 Conduct a continuous impromptu oral interaction on familiar topics, a moderate amount of hesitation being allowed. 3.2 Ask for and give opinions through oral interaction on familiar matters such as music, film.
	4. Explain or describe different personal experiences and events.	4.1 Speak in detail about experiences and events and describe feelings. 4.2 Give reasons and short explanations as opinions.
	5. Write simple connected texts on	5.1 Write texts on familiar topics or matters of interest such as personal

Unit of Competence	Element of Competence	Performance Criteria
	familiar matters.	<p>letters giving details about experiences, events and feelings.</p> <p>5.2 Write short and simple essays on topics of interest.</p>

Table 1 shows English Proficiency Standard Level 3 - that is, English teachers who attain the English Proficiency Standard at this level use basic English (four skills) for communication concerned with matters with which they are familiar. They are able to understand and identify the main points of spoken texts on matters with which they are familiar; and are able to speak and write about familiar contexts. To assess the English Proficiency Standard Level 3, the English teachers have to demonstrate that they understand and can identify the main points of spoken texts dealing with familiar situations such as clear standard conversations, news from audio media, etc. They can read and understand texts encountered in everyday life e.g., letters, brochures, etc. and also identify the main ideas of articles on familiar topics. They can take part in conversations in everyday situations and are able to describe personal experiences and events. They are also able to write simple connected texts (paragraph level) on matters with which they are familiar.

Table 2

TPQI Professional Qualification Framework: English Proficiency Standards
Level 4

Unit of Competence	Element of Competence	Performance Criteria
Use English for communication in one's field of specialization	1. Listen to and comprehend spoken stories with complicated details.	1.1 Listen to and understand conversations with clear structures. 1.2 Listen to and understand the main points of informal lectures, speeches, reports, and academic presentations with complex structures. 1.3 Listen to and understand documentaries from audio media with sensitivity to the tone of the speakers. 1.4 Listen to and understand news and reports of current events, live interviews, dramas, and films.
	2. Read and identify the main ideas of articles and reports regarding current problems.	2.1 Read and identify the main ideas of news, articles and reports promptly. 2.2 Read and understand articles and reports related to current

Unit of Competence	Element of Competence	Performance Criteria
		problems and authors' attitudes and opinions.
	3. Speak and take part in oral interaction with native speakers with fluency.	3.1 Communicate on general topics quite fluently and continuously. 3.2 Support opinions in discussion by providing explanations and arguments.
	4. Present information upon topics of interest.	4.1 Describe details of topics of interest. 4.2 Express opinions on problematic topics and indicate advantages and disadvantages.
	5. Write narratives, essays, and reports on topics of interest.	5.1 Write autobiographical accounts and essays related to interests. 5.2 Write essays, reports, articles, and critiques of films, books, or dramas.

Table 2 displays English Proficiency Standards Level 4 - that is, English teachers who have achieved English Proficiency Standard at this level use English for communication (four skills) in their fields of specialization, which requires higher competency in the English language than Level 3. They understand spoken texts with complicated details; and they read and identify

the main ideas of articles and reports. They speak fluently and take part in the conversations with native speakers and present information upon topics of interest. They also write narratives, essays, and reports. To assess the English Proficiency Standard Level 4, English teachers have to identify the main points of informal lectures, speeches, reports and academic presentations and understand news and current situations in a wide range of areas instead of familiar topics mentioned in the standard Level 3. They read and understand news, articles, and reports promptly and understand authors' attitudes and opinions, which means that the reading materials are more difficult and the teachers have to be able to read between the lines. They speak English fluently and give opinions and presentations logically. They write stories, essays and reports, which requires higher writing skills than Level 3.

Table 3

TPQI Professional Qualification Framework: English Proficiency Standards Level 5

Unit of Competence	Element of Competence	Performance Criteria
Use English for communication both in and out of one's field of specialization.	1. Listen to and comprehend spoken texts which are not well organized and have unclear structure.	<p>1.1 Listen to and comprehend discussions and arguments in group conversations on unfamiliar topics.</p> <p>1.2 Listen to and comprehend speeches as well as most discussions and arguments with ease.</p> <p>1.3 Listen to and comprehend spoken messages in which</p>

Unit of Competence	Element of Competence	Performance Criteria
		<p>the speakers do not use standard English and identify main ideas, attitudes, and relationships between speakers.</p> <p>1.4 Listen to and comprehend films in which slang and idioms are used.</p>
	<p>2. Read and identify the main ideas of long complicated stories and academic articles.</p>	<p>2.1 Read and comprehend long and complicated written texts details drawn from social and professional contexts and identify the writers' attitudes and opinions on the basis of both implicit and explicit messages they provide.</p> <p>2.2 Read and follow specialized articles, procedures and instructions which are long and hard to understand, both in and out of one's fields of specialization.</p>
	<p>3. Speak and make responses in social, professional, and academic contexts fluently.</p>	<p>3.1 Speak and respond fluently and spontaneously, using proper language in social contexts with sensitivity to humor, puns, and implications.</p>

Unit of Competence	Element of Competence	Performance Criteria
		3.2 Participate in group discussions on unfamiliar professional and academic topics.
	4. Present complicated content clearly and make a proper summary.	4.1 Describe complicated topics clearly and in detail. 4.2 Tell complex stories with clear themes, plots, and endings.
	5. Write long, complicated essays and reports.	5.1 Write details, support personal opinions, and provide reasons and examples. 5.2 Write well-organized essays, with clear details and sophisticated language structures.

Table 3 presents English Proficiency Standard Level 5 - that is, English teachers who have attained English Proficiency Standard at this level use English for communication (four skills) both in and out of their fields of specialization. The English teachers at Level 5 possess higher English language competence than those at Level 4. They understand disorganized spoken texts with unclear structures and patterns. They identify the main ideas of long stories and academic articles with complicated details. They speak and make responses in social, professional, and academic contexts fluently; and present complicated content clearly. They write long, complicated essays and reports. To measure the elements of competence, it is suggested that more complicated listening materials be used than those for Level 4 on a wide range of listening topics and involving complicated English language which is

disorganized and which contains slang and idioms. They have to understand long and difficult reading texts clearly. They can describe the details clearly and explain complicated topics. They also write well-organized essays, with clear details and sophisticated language structures.

5. Discussion

This English Language Teachers Professional Qualification Framework is an important step toward improving the quality of English language teachers in Thailand. The framework provides a guide to what teachers should know and be able to do in order to equip students with high quality English language knowledge, abilities, and skills. It also helps teachers to develop themselves in their professional lives to meet higher standards. Throughout the development of this Professional Qualification Framework, the researchers included representatives of diverse groups of English teaching professionals in order to ensure its acceptance among the Thai English teaching profession.

The important duty of English language teachers is to develop their students' English language proficiency; therefore, their English language proficiency has to be strong enough to carry out this duty (NBPTS, 2010). Many well-known occupational standards for teachers of English language such as the TESOL standards (2003), the ACTFT standards (2012) and the standards for teachers of English language and literacy of the Australian Association for the Teaching of English (2002) agree that capability in the four skills, namely speaking, listening, reading and writing of English language proficiency are necessary for teachers of the English language.

The performance criteria developed in this framework provide an opportunity to measure how good the teachers' language proficiency is. Moreover, the performance standards in the study are graded in levels of English language competency from basic to advanced, which is now appropriate in Thailand.

Another point that is worth mentioning is that this Professional Qualification Framework attempts to match each TPQI level with CEFR because CEFR is widely used among different countries, including Thailand. The policy to reform English learning and teaching in Thailand issued by Ministry of Education (2013) sets out achievement goals in learning English, stating that students finishing Grade 6 should have acquired English language proficiency at the CEFR A1 level; those completing Grade 9 should have CEFR A2 level proficiency; those at Grade 12, B1 level proficiency; and bachelor' degree graduates, B2 level proficiency. This implies that the English language teachers must possess better English language proficiency than their students. Consequently, using the CEFR to grade the teachers' English language proficiency is suitable for the Thai educational context. The five groups of English teaching professionals and experts involved in this project also agreed that to carry out the responsibilities of being an English teacher, a teacher must achieve at least the B1 level in the CEFR. However, choosing English teachers to teach students of a given level depends on the supervisors or sometimes the employers. Due to the fact that there is no standardized English language proficiency test that directly serves this standard at present, matching the present standards with the CEFR provides supervisors and employers a way to use international standardized tests as measuring tools. The scores of international standardized tests are usually matched with CEFR levels. That is, the results from standardized tests of the four skills indicate certain CEFR levels. For example, IELTS, TOEFL iBT can be used to verify English language

proficiency; TOEFL iBT scores 42-71 and IELTS level 4.0-5.0 are claimed to be equivalent to CEFR level B1 (Papageorgiou, et al., 2015, IELTS, 2017).

6. Conclusion

The present study has developed English proficiency standards for English language teachers in Thailand. English language proficiency is the essential competence needed for those who want to teach English especially in Thailand, where English is widely used as a foreign language. According to the TPQI Professional Qualification Framework, there are three levels of English proficiency standards: Level 3, Level 4 and Level 5. Each level focuses on four language skills, beginning at Level 3, at which English language teachers must have an English proficiency equivalent to CEFR B1. Having this professional qualification framework can assure the quality of English teachers and assist in accomplishing the goal of learning English in Thailand.

7. Suggestions

The use of English Language Teachers Professional Qualification Framework will be more effective if the TPQI introduces this English Language Teachers Professional Qualification Framework to the authorities such as the Minister of Education, the Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Education and the Secretary General of Office of the Basic Education Commission. Thus, they should implement this standard among both Thai and foreign teachers of the English language in order to raise teaching quality of English teachers and

the English communication capability of Thai students in general. Gaining the certificate not only reveals teachers' English language competence, but it will also provide teachers a guide to advancing themselves to higher levels of competence.

Although attaining the present standard is not compulsory, employers such as the owners of private schools and language institutes will benefit if they apply them. The employers can use the certification as a tool in hiring and promoting their teaching staff in accordance with their knowledge, skills and abilities. Moreover, parents and students will feel confident in the instruction processes and outcomes of the schools.

The TPQI should cooperate with universities to provide training courses for English language teachers who want to gain the certificate. The purpose of the training courses is to prepare teachers for the assessment process and to develop the competency of teachers.

Last, but not least, the TPQI should support the development of a standardized test of English language proficiency in accordance with the English proficiency standards developed in this study as it will be appropriate to the English teaching and learning contexts in Thailand and the cost of taking a such standardized test for English language teachers in Thailand would be less.

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