

FRELE-TH: Springboard for Holistic English Educational Reform

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Abstract

This article reviews problems and challenges of English educational situations in Thailand and it explores, as part of the Educational Reform, the Framework of Reference for English Language Education in Thailand – FRELE-TH (2017) based on the CEFR (Council of Europe, 2001) which was developed as a research study, granted by Thailand Professional Qualification Institute (TPQI), through the collaboration between Chulalongkorn University Language Institute and the Language Institute of Thammasat University. The paper, more significantly discusses the FRELE-TH (2017) as a shared basis for reflection and communication among the different partners and practitioners in English Language Education, including the academics and the professions in Thailand. This involves the paradigm shift from content to competence in curriculum or syllabus planning, course materials development and evaluation (digital learning and digital testing) at different levels. Learners' significant involvement in the process is emphasized.

Keywords: educational reform, English language education, language reference framework

Introduction

This purpose of this article is to firstly address some problems and challenges of the English educational development in Thailand in relation to global competitiveness of the country. It then discusses the roles of Framework of Reference for English Language Education in Thailand-FRELE-TH (2017) based on the CEFR (Council of Europe, 2001), as a springboard or a flexible platform for reflection, connection and communication among the different stakes in English Language Education, including the academics and the professions in Thailand.

Thais' Low English Competence Hindering Global Competitiveness

As it is evident that English plays an important role in the international communication, it is considered the global language (Crystal, 2003) and recognized as a lingua franca (Jenkins, 2006). It is as yet considered the powerful instrument for community building in Asia. More significantly, it is the working language of ASEAN Economic Community (AEC) and with English, people can go across the border to fulfill their social, economic and educational purposes. The majority of Asian people, however, do not have the proficiency of English (Pitsuwan, 2014). Most Thai people, in particular, are not competent in terms of English communication, and, thus, are less privileged to enjoy such mobility.

As can be expected, language is one of the important factors influencing countries' competitiveness. To illustrate, the 2014 European Competitiveness Report (2014) reveals language as one of the factors which influence SME internationalization. Additionally, English language, in particular, is an important factor in Thai tourism industry competitiveness (Thitthongkam & Wash, 2011). The low ability of English is one of the causes of Thailand's low Global competitiveness. Thailand ranks 32nd of 137 countries with a score of 4.7 (out of 7) on the Global Competitiveness Index Report 2017-2018 (2017) and it

shows inadequately educated workforce as one of the most problematic factors of doing business (9.7). More noticeably, the country's Global competitiveness is indexed low in quality of primary education, quality of the education system, and local availability of specialized local services although the country spends a great portion (approximately 20%) of the annual budget on education (NationThailand, 2018).

Thailand's economical growth and stability are hindered due to the fact that its standard of English skills continues to drop compared to other Southeast Asian countries (Bangkok Post, 2018). Some reliable evidence shows that Thai learners and users of English do not have high proficiency level and do not perform satisfactorily their English skills. To illustrate, the EF English Proficiency Index (2018) reveals the low proficiency of Thailand in comparison with other countries. On the 2018 Index, Thailand ranks 64th with a score of 48.54 at the low proficiency level out of the 88 countries, a lower rank than that in 2017 (EF EPI, 2017) at 53rd with the EF EPI score of 49.78 out of 80 countries. Also, on Pisa reading (Pisa, 2015), the worldwide study of 15-year-old students' scholastic performance on reading in 70 countries (2015-2016) reveals Thailand's rank of 55th with the score of 415. In other words, Thailand's English skills are the lowest in Southeast Asian countries including Vietnam whose English skills are surpassing Thailand's, not to mention Malaysia and Indonesia.

As clearly evidenced, better English proficiency can improve global competitiveness. A higher level of Thai people's English competence could enhance Thailand to become more competitive and to be more functional in the global communication. A special look at the way English plays an important part in communication in the 21st century and as drive for life-long learning needs a deeper reconsideration. In this perspective, use of English is not limited only to the linguistic knowledge of grammar, but it covers the range of skills and abilities to enhance learners and users of English to be able to do things. In other words, English ability is focused on the way it contributes to learners' and users' competence in fulfilling the skills and activities in their special context. Work force requirements survey (Fadel, 2008) and research in 21st century skills for the changing world (Lamb, Maire & Doecke, 2017) specify a number of key knowledge, skills and literacies required by individuals to be functional in the changing world context: Learning and innovation skills, Digital literacy skills, and Career and life skills. Learning and innovation skills cover critical thinking and problem solving, creativity and innovation, communication and collaboration; Digital literacy refers to information literacy, media literacy and ICT literacy; and Career and life skills include flexibility and adaptability, initiative and self direction, social and cross-cultural interaction, productivity and accountability, leadership and responsibility. Obviously English plays a crucial role in the acquisition and the performance of these 21st skills and competences.

Problems and Challenges of English Education in Thailand

It is worth noting that although Thai students spend quite a number of years (10-12 years) on studying English in formal education, they are not able to use English in communication. With the emphasis on language accuracy and memorization or rote learning rather than communication, most Thai students are left unable to converse effectively in English. In fact, the stipulation of the Common European Framework for Reference –CEFR (Council of Europe, 2001), an international framework of language reference commonly used not only in European countries but more globally, to be used for schools as the main principles of the enacting of English language teaching and learning as part of the English Language reforming policy in Thailand (Ministry of Education, 2014) was announced in 2014. It sets forth using the CEFR (Council of Europe, 2001) in designing language curriculum, testing and assessment of learning outcomes. The CEFR (Council of Europe, 2001), hence, has been

aligned by the Ministry of Education for setting the English proficiency targets for students; for example, by the end of the primary level, students should have level A1 proficiency; by the end of the secondary level or junior high school (Mattayom 3), students should have level A2, by the end of senior high school (Mattayom 6), students should have Level B1 proficiency. University students should have Level B 2. The CEFR (Council of Europe, 2001) is also used for monitoring teacher development as well. For teachers of English in Thailand, they should graduate with C1 level (Chianraitimes, 2019). According to the Office of Basic Education, teachers of English need to reach one level higher than the level of the class they teach. In 2015, the Minister of Education had Thai teachers of English take a CEFR-referenced online placement test. It has revealed that 75 % of English teachers in Thailand speak English at an A2 elementary level; more noticeably, most of the teachers referred to the CEFR (Council of Europe, 2001) as “first and foremost a test” and as another “test in the eyes of most teachers and had no subsequent impact on improving classroom teaching (Franz & Teo, 2017). The National Scheme of education (2017) also states that one of the weaknesses is the development of the personnel in the field of English, among other fields. Therefore, it is undeniable that teachers of English, one of the stakes, actually a main key factor in English Education in Thailand, are also among the personnel mentioned. It could be frustrating and even demotivating for the students and, also, teachers of English when they cannot reach the target levels set for them. Other two main challenges that need to be addressed, however, are teachers’ skills and their teaching approach, according to the Education Minister (Bangkok Post, 2018).

As revealed in research, some factors affecting the failure of English teaching and learning include poorly-motivated students, rare opportunities for student exposure to English outside of class time (Dhanasobhon, 2006). Some other problems involve lack of the opportunities for students to use English in daily lives and unchallenging English lessons (Wiriyachitra, 2002). For teachers, apart from low English skills, other problems involve unqualified and poorly trained-teachers. A study of English teaching problems in Thailand (Noom-ura, 2013) shows that teachers are concerned about great problems with strategies in teaching listening-speaking, conversation and writing and with assessment of listening-speaking skills, writing and listening and they would need professional development related to these skills. More importantly, teachers’ perceptions reveal that students’ lack of patience practicing English and students’ minimal exposure to English outside class and lack of responsibility in their own learning (Wiriyachitra, 2002) are crucial causes of their failure in English.

The reforming policy of aligning the CEFR (Council of Europe, 2001) levels by the Ministry of Education for setting the English proficiency targets for students and teachers; hence has not yielded satisfactory results in that the students and even the teachers cannot meet the targets. It is found that most students cannot use English in communication, not to mention its use as the tool for knowledge researching (Prasongporn, 2017). At the tertiary levels, universities in Thailand are required by the Office of Higher Education (OHEC) to align the outcome of their English courses to the CEFR (Council of Europe, 2001). University students are required to be assessed of their English proficiency and to attain their level (B2) set on the CEFR (Council of Europe, 2001). The results of implementing the CEFR (Council of Europe, 2001) to improve students’ English abilities are not yet satisfactory. For example, the students in the lower southern Thailand still have very low English proficiency than the expected level of basic users by the Ministry of education (Ketamon, Pomduang, Na Phayap & Hanchayanon (2018). As success of English language education requires the collaboration of all stakeholders, students and Teachers as the key agents should realize their important roles and assume their active roles as learners. They should not be taken as empty glasses to be filled with theoretical frameworks and skills.

Students in particular, are actually the masters of their learning. They should be empowered to be responsible for their own learning as part of their lifelong learning.

FRELE-TH as a Basis of English Educational Reform

Reasons for the Creation of FRELE-TH

To solve the problems of the Thai learners and teachers of English who cannot reach the CEFR levels set by the Ministry of Education, it is necessary to point out how the Framework of Reference for English Education in Thailand-FRELE-TH (2017) is more comprehensible than the CEFR (2001) to the Thai audiences and to be in their reach for the following reasons:

First, based on the CEFR (Council of Europe, 2001), similar to the CEFR (Council of Europe, 2001), the FRELE-TH (2017) specifies a taxonomic descriptive scheme, covering three domains or components of English use for communication, namely, Communicative activities ('Can Do' descriptors), Communication strategies and Communicative linguistic competences which learners or users need for such activities with the similar purposes of targeting at communication to enhance people mobility. However, to solve the problem of Thai education in which Thai learners and teachers of English have poor English abilities and low proficiency levels, the FRELE-TH (2017), thereby, adopts the CEFR with the plus level (Council of Europe, 2001: 32-36) resulting in a set of ten common reference levels (A1, A1+, A2, A2+, B1, B1+, B2, B2+, C1, and C2) instead of the CEFR six levels (A1, A2, B1, B2, C1 and C2) (See Figure 1). The ten proficiency levels can be benchmarked with the CEFR (Council of Europe, 2001, Ministry of Education, 2016) (See Figure 1).

Figure 1: FRELE-TH levels equivalent to the CEFR and the CEFR with the plus levels.

FRELE-TH	CEFR Proficiency level (with plus levels)	CEFR Proficiency level	Standard level
A1	A1	A1	Basic user
A1+	A1+		
A2	A2	A2	
A2+	A2+		
B1	B1	B1	Independent user
B1+	B1+		
B 2	B2		
B 2+	B2+		
C1	C1	C1	Proficient user
C2	C2	C2	

This set of ten common reference levels defines English proficiency or competences in a Global scale with Thai translation (See Figure 2.) and in a set of illustrative scales, each of which contains descriptors pertinent to the level with more common vocabulary and sentence patterns. For example, descriptors of A1 Speaking Interaction contains

“Can understand and respond to very simple expressions of communication delivered very clearly and slowly with some repetition and rephrasing...” FRELE-TH (2017, p 57) which is simpler to understand compared to

Can interact in a simple way but communication is totally dependent on repetition at a slower rate of speech, rephrasing and ...CEFR (Council of Europe, 2001, p72)

Figure 2: FRELE-TH Global scale

Level	Descriptors
A2+	<p>The learner/user</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - can understand simple spoken English delivered clearly at a slow speed. - can understand speech on everyday topics, containing daily life vocabulary and expressions. - can understand short, simple written English about everyday topics. - <i>can engage in structured, short conversations with adequate help of the other interlocutor.</i> - can produce written texts using simple sentences and simple connectors with limited vocabulary. - can find the main idea of short spoken and written texts on everyday topics. - can guess the meaning of unfamiliar words using contextual clues. - <i>can deal with everyday situations using a repertoire of basic language in predictable situations.</i> - <i>can use short everyday expressions to communicate and describe personal information, routine activities, requests, etc.</i> - <i>has sufficient vocabulary to communicate in routine, everyday situations on familiar topics.</i>
B1	<p>The learner/user</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - can understand the main points of clear speech on a familiar matters regularly encountered in work, school, leisure, etc., including short narratives. - can read factual texts on subjects related to his/her field and interest at a satisfactory level of comprehension. - <i>can exploit a wide range of simple language for conversations on familiar topics, express personal opinions and exchange information on topics that are familiar, of personal interest or pertinent to everyday life.</i> - <i>can write straightforward, connected texts on a range of familiar subjects within his/her field of interest, by linking a series of shorter discrete elements into a linear sequence.</i> - can understand key words and phrases in conversations and use them to follow the topic. - can guess the meaning of occasional unknown words from the context and deduce sentence meaning provided that the topic discussed is familiar. - <i>can work out how to communicate the main points he/she wants to get across in a range of contexts, limiting the message to what he/she can recall or find the means to express himself/herself though with some hesitation and circumlocutions on familiar topics.</i>
B1+	<p>The learner/user</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - can understand straightforward speech on a range of subjects related to his/her field and personal interest, provided that the speech is clearly articulated with a generally familiar accent and at a speech rate. - can read and understand factual texts on subjects related to his/her field and interest, provided that the information given is exclusively or mainly offered explicitly. - <i>can communicate with some confidence on familiar routine and non-routine matters related to his/her interests and professional field, but may have some difficulty in expressing exactly what he or she would like to communicate.</i>

Level	Descriptors
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>can reasonably fluently sustain a straightforward description of a variety of familiar subjects within his/her field of interest, presenting them as a linear sequence of points.</i> - <i>can write straightforward connected texts on a range of familiar subjects within his/her field of interest and employ appropriate rhetorical organization.</i> - <i>can make use of clues such as keywords, titles, illustrations, typographical devices (e.g. bolding, italicizing, paragraphing), pauses, tones of voice, discourse markers, and rhetorical and organizations to come up with the meaning of unfamiliar words, identify the main idea and supporting details of a particular text or speech on familiar topics, as well as distinguish facts from opinions.</i> - <i>has a sufficient range of language to describe unpredictable situations, explain the main points in an idea or problem with reasonable precision and express thoughts on abstract or cultural topics such as music and films.</i>

Therefore the FRELE-TH (2017), an adaptation of the CEFR (Council, 2001) for Thailand is more practical and more understandable as pointed out by Foley (2019, 7) that the FRELE-TH is “flexible allowing levels and categories to merge and sub-divide as appropriate”. This reflects the CEFR’s principle, not to offer ready-made solutions but to be adapted to the requirements of particular contexts (North, 2014, p 62). Similar practice has been adopted by CEFR-J (Negishi, Takada & Tono, 2013) and China Standards of English Language Ability (2018).

Second, most of the exponents or linguistic realizations, topics and vocabulary of the FRELE-TH (2017) are conducive to linguistic, socio-cultural use of English in the Thai context in relation to international and global communication. To illustrate, the learner/user at Levels A1 and A1+ is introduced to signs “Keep left.” as drivers drive in the left lane in Thailand and he/she talks about mangoes and elephants and Thai food. At Levels A2 and A2+, the learner/user talks about common food and beverages, with the influence of western cultural exchange, for instance, hamburgers and coke and starts playing computer games and social networks and meets a person/visitor from Spain. At Levels B1 and B1+, the learner/user gives opinion on more critical and substantial issues including wearing uniforms, animal testing, keeping animals in cages, learning a third language and alternative sources of energy. In this way, Thai learners and users of English are able to use the suggested vocabulary to express their common concepts and to talk about their culture as well as having the opportunity to exchange and interact on varied global issues. Also the FRELE-TH (2017) addresses not only the functions and the forms but also the strategies of the language use with the promotion of language learning as discovery about other cultures and acquisition of perspectives about learners’ or users’ culture. This can help teachers of English to use and adapt the communication strategies suitable for the levels in their teaching of the related skills. For instance, A1 learners can use gestures such as pointing to identify familiar topics and B1+ can convey meaning by modifying a word meaning something similar such as “a truck for people to refer to a bus” FRELE-TH (2017, p. 34)

Some Criticisms against the Adoption of the CEFR and the Adaptations of the Framework Including the FRELE-TH in Asian Contexts

Some criticisms have been made against the adaptations of the CEFR (Council of Europe, 2001) in Thailand, Malaysia and Vietnam for English Language Educational context for the heavy emphasis on the frameworks' proficiency scales set resulting in excessive focus on testing as the main tool for raising the competence level in English (Foley, 2019). This great emphasis on the proficiency levels with little contextualization of the frameworks including the FRELE-TH for multilingual and multicultural communication is obvious (Savski, 2019). It is likely that learners or users taking the tests with no real purpose for self improvement in communication but only for satisfying the requirements of prescribed rules or varied immediate needs.

For this particular issue, it is worth drawing the attention to the original aims of the CEFR (Council of 2001), which is not merely to focus on a set of six proficiency levels, but to “facilitate reflection, communication and networking among language syllabuses, courses, and examinations and to meet needs in real world context (Council of Europe, 2001, p. 9). That is, it is aimed to connect teaching and assessment, focusing on profiling language proficiency, not leveling (Council of Europe, 2001, p. 11). Also, learners should be told what the objectives are in terms of activities, and relevant aspects of quality in performance in those activities. What is important is to involve learners in an age-appropriate way in the setting of objectives and in the monitoring of achievement in those objectives to help the learners to become more self-directed. The success of the CEFR (Council of Europe, 2001) lies in the fact that it could stress meaningful proficiency levels and provide a ‘learning ladder of bite-sized accessible learning targets (Nuffield Languages Programme, 2002, p. 8).

From this perspective, it can be reviewed that the early adoption of the CERF (Council of Europe, 2001) in the English Educational Reform in Thailand did not focus on the original aim of the Framework, but only on testing proficiency levels as such. The philosophy of the FRELE-TH (2017) based on the CEFR (Council of Europe, 2001), however, embraces the concepts of competence-based learning and assessment as it values the provision of profiled grades which promotes a sense of achievement, rather than a single mark, which could “lessen motivation as the positive impact on classroom assessment” (Piccardo, 2013, p. 193-196). These are the focal points to elaborate further how The FRELE-TH (2017) as competence based orientation is viable to solve the current problems of the English teaching and learning in Thailand.

FRELE-TH as Competence-Based Learning and Assessment: A Possible Solution to Thai People's Low English Abilities

The FRELE-TH is competence-based. A competency refers to a combination of skills, abilities and knowledge, needed to perform a specific task (The Glossary of Education Reform for Journalists, Parents and Community Members, 2014). Competence/competency-based learning (Voorhees, 2019) refers to systems of instruction, assessment that are based on learners' demonstrating that they have learned the knowledge and skills that they are expected to learn. According to Competency-based Learning (Utah State Board of Education, 2019), the goals of competency-based learning is to make sure that learners learn what they are expected to learn and it can provide educators and stakeholders with more “detailed or fine grained information about learners' progress which can help them more precisely identify academic strengths and weaknesses, as well as the specific concepts and skills learners have not yet mastered” It moves beyond information dissemination to a focus on transferrable skills, necessary for success in the modern world. These competencies are

explicit, measurable and transferable, contributive to application and creation of knowledge, with the development of important skills and dispositions.

Strengths of Competence-based Learning and Assessment:

What is relevant to the Educational reform is the paradigm shift from content-based learning and assessment focusing on students' knowing the rules and grammar of the language, to the competence-based approach in which students are encouraged to do what they want or need to do in English with more practical outcomes. Some advantages of the competence-based can be further discussed. Firstly, stakeholders including students, parents, teachers and policy educators can make some connection between planning, teaching and assessment. The FRELE-TH descriptors can relate learning and testing objectives to real world needs, both in terms of the selection of 'Can Do' activities and the relevant aspects of quality in the performance in those activities.

Secondly, as part of the research study, the FRELE-TH (2017) was used by groups of professionals with 100 participants from professional councils and associations of professions such as Thailand Nursing and Midwifery Council, Women Secretary and Administrative Professionals Association of Thailand and the Thai Public Taxi Association, to name a few, to gauge the English ability levels required for achievement by their professions. For this purpose, the FRELE-TH was used for the calibration of professional purposes in focus-group interviews of participants from a variety of professions to suggest for setting the required standard of English ability levels (See Figure 3). Referring to those suggested levels of English skills, students can have more meaningful feedback to their test performance in that from the test results, they know what level of English they have gained and what their weaknesses are and what more attention they need to reach the goals. In this way, students are able to set their goals in learning English.

Figure 3: Suggested levels of English skills based on FRELE-TH required by the professions

Professional	Listening	Reading	Speaking	Writing
Tourist guide	C2	B2-C1	C2	B1-B2+
Tour manager	B2-C2	B2-C2	C1-C2	B1+-C2
Immigration officer	B1+-B2+	B1-B2+	A2+-B2	A2+-B1+
Secretary	B1+-C2	B2-C2	A2+-B1	B1-C2
Engineer	B2+	C1	B2	B2+
Teacher of English	B2+-C2	B2+-C1	C1	C1
Army training commander	B1+-B2+	B1+-B2+	B1+-B2+	A2+-B1
Architect	B2 – B2+	B2 – C1	B1+ – B2	B2 – B2+
Nurse	B1-B1+	B1+-B2	B1	B1
Pharmacist	B2	C1	B2	B2+
Customs officer	B1+	B2	B1+-B2	B2
Taxi driver	A2	A1+	A2	A1+
Hotel General manager, HM, EAM	C1-C2	C1-C2	C1-C2	C1-C2
Hotel DHR, Executive secretary	B2+-C1	B2+-C1	B2+-C1	B2+-C1
Hotel DOFA	B2-B2+	B2-B2+	B2-B2+	B2-B2+
Hotel communications director	C1-C2	C1-C2	C1-C2	C1-C2
Hotel communications manager	B2+-C1	B2+-C1	B2+-C1	B2+-C1
Hotel communications assistant manager	B2-B2+	B2-B2+	B2-B2+	B2-B2+
Hotel communications officer	B1+-B2	B1+-B2	B1+-B2	B1+-B2
Hotel front director/Manager	C1-C2	C1-C2	C1-C2	C1-C2
Hotel front assistant, Chief concierge	B2+-C1	B2+-C1	B2+-C1	B2+-C1
Hotel shift leader	B2-B2+	B2-B2+	B2-B2+	B2-B2+

Professional	Listening	Reading	Speaking	Writing
Hotel receptionist	B1+-B2	B1+-B2	B1+-B2	B1+-B2
Hotel housekeeping executive	B2-B2+	B2-B2+	B2-B2+	B2-B2+
Hotel housekeeping assistant executive	B1+-B2	B1+-B2	B1+-B2	B1+-B2
Hotel housekeeping coordinator	B1-B1+	B1-B1+	B1-B1+	B1-B1+
Hotel housekeeping supervisor	A2-A2+	A2-A2+	A2-A2+	A2-A2+
Hotel room attendant, Public area, Attendant	A1-A1+	A1-A1+	A1-A1+	A1-A1+
Hotel food & beverages Director, Assistant director	C1-C2	C1-C2	C1-C2	C1-C2
Hotel food & beverages manager	B1+-B2	B1+-B2	B1+-B2	B1+-B2
Hotel food & beverages assistant manager/Supervisor	B1-B1+	B1-B1+	B1-B1+	B1-B1+
Hotel waiter	A2-A2+	A2-A2+	A2-A2+	A2-A2+
Hotel bus boy	A1-A1+	A1-A1+	A1-A1+	A1-A1+
Hotel-sales marketing director	C1-C2	C1-C2	C1-C2	C1-C2
Hotel sales marketing assistant manager	B2+-C1	B2+-C1	B2+-C1	B2+-C1
Hotel revenue director, Manager	B2+-C1	B2+-C1	B2+-C1	B2+-C1
Hotel revenue assistant manager, Supervisor	B2-B2+	B2-B2+	B2-B2+	B2-B2+
Hotel revenue officer	B1-B1+	B1-B1+	B1-B1+	B1-B1+
Hotel engineering director	B2-B2+	B2-B2+	B2-B2+	B2-B2+
Hotel technician/Engineer	A1-A1+	A1-A1+	A1-A1+	A1-A1+
Hotel director	C1	C1	C1	C1
Hotel kitchen executive chef	B2+-C1	B2+-C1	B2+-C1	B2+-C1
Hotel kitchen executive sous chef	B2-B2+	B2-B2+	B2-B2+	B2-B2+
Hotel stewarding manager, Cook who need to work on cooking station	A2-A2+	A2-A2+	A2-A2+	A2-A2+
Hotel chief gardener	A1+	A1+	A1+	A1
Hotel florist manager	A1+	A1	A1+	A1
Hotel spa manager	B2-B2+	B2-B2+	B2-B2+	B2-B2+
Hotel therapist	A2-A2+	A2-A2+	A2-A2+	A2-A2+
Attorney	B1+	B1	B2	A2+
Pilot	B2	B1	B1	B1
Tourist police	A2+-B1+	A2+-B1+	A2+-B1	A2+-B1
Accountant (local/international)	A2/B2	A2/B1+	A2/B1+	A2/B2
Auditor (local/international)	A2+/B2+	A2+/B2	A2+/B2	A2+/B2+
Flight attendant/purser (international)	B2+	C1	B2+	B2 – B2+
Flight attendant (international)	A2+-B2+	A2+-B1	A2+-B1	A2+-B1

With details of the standards specified by professions, students can set their goals in English learning which will encourage them to become life-long learners as they can serve as a drive for their self-motivation to engage more in their English study to reach their goals.

The implementation of the competence-based learning and assessment could be done and reinforced in the paradigm shift of the Thai university admission from the content-based to competence-based assessment in Thailand. The FRELE-TH (2017), which can be internationally benchmarked, is a useful tool for the development of a competency-based learning activities and tasks for testing and assessment in which learners' knowledge, skills and attitude can be learned and used in achieving English performance in the specified context and to meet the standards previously set in the required context and situations. For learners and students, 'Can Do' descriptors are keys in the learning and teaching process as they are "primarily a communication tool that allows learners to be treated as partners"

(North, 2014, p 109). At the outset, ‘Can Do’ descriptors can be used to encourage students to negotiate their needs and priorities of objectives, learning communicative tasks and other activities including self study activities. They also serve as signposts to students of their learning progress. In terms of evaluation and accountability, they can be employed as evidence of achievement by means of self monitoring and self-evaluation. In the Thai context, it is not a common practice to have students as partners in the design of course content and materials. They normally rely on the teachers to provide them what to learn. This can lead to serious problems in English language learning such as lack of motivation and low level of perseverance in practicing, no goal-setting and, hence, less responsibility and less English exposure in their learning. These problems were already addressed by teachers of English in Thailand as hindrance of their Thai students learning English (Noom-Ura, 2013). These internal factors can contribute to failure of learning a language. Many researchers emphasize the importance of goal-setting toward language learning (Naiman, Frohlick, Stern & Todesco, 1978; Oxford, & Shearin, 1994). Studies show a significant link between goal setting and student language achievement (Abe, Ilogu, & Madueke, 2014; Moeller, Theiler, & Wu, 2012;). It is important that students should participate in setting their goals (Azevedo, Ragan, Cromley, & Pritchett, 2002). Goals in learning should be specific to yield satisfactory results which are measureable and challenging. Normally, teachers set goals or outcomes for classroom learning which can be different from students’ personal goal leading to students’ low motivation due to lack of understanding why they are involved in the learning process (Dornyai, 2001). The FRELE-TH (2017) provides English teachers with the opportunity for students to participate in setting the goals or outcomes for learning by employing ‘Can Do’ descriptors so that they know the actual outcomes of their progress in communication. Some examples of course design illustrating materials and activities focusing on self monitoring or self assessment and self evaluation based on FRELE-TH “Can Do” descriptors (Hiranburana et al, 2018) reveal how students are promoted to monitor the progress of their learning. Therefore, in this competence-based approach, students become active learners. More precisely, students become the masters of their learning, taking the roles of co-partners to develop their communicative goals in their learning, self efficacy, learning strategies and English competency, more appropriately in this era of Educational Reform towards Thailand 4.0,

For teachers, it is worth clarifying their roles in this competence-based approach, they not only monitor students’ progress, but also, as the key agent in the learning process, engaging students in the situations in which they can use their available resources, whether they are linguistic knowledge or communication strategies or learning strategies, in actual communication appropriate to the context to achieve the goals set and negotiated by students. As mentioned earlier, the FRELE-TH (2017) includes not merely the ‘CAN DO’ descriptors, but communication strategies and linguistic realizations and other resources suitable for the levels and they can be introduced to students implicitly in their practice of communication activities and also in explicit teaching. In this way, students can use and develop their own strategies in communication not only to interact in English but they can apply these strategies in communication with people from other cultures speaking other languages. From this view, Thai teachers of English should have training with a focus on fostering communication skills and strategies and learning strategies so that Thai students and learners will be able to develop those skills as part of his life-long learning tool for further self development.

In implementing the competence-based learning and assessment, the Independent Committee for Educational Reform, Office of the Education Council, Thailand is launching two pilot projects based on the FRELE-TH (2017): Digital Learning Platform Project and University Admission Project. The first project aiming at bridging the inequity gap of English Education in remote areas is the use of the FRELE-TH (2017) in the design of digital learning

media for Prathom 3 on applications on mobile phones to supplement the regular English courses. When ready, students, who participate in this project, can take the competence-based tests as part of the formative assessment of which students are advised their strengths and weaknesses. Also, they and their parents are informed of the level of FRELE-TH (2017) they have attained. In this way, students and their parents can have information of English abilities students require in higher educational levels such as at secondary and tertiary levels which can contribute to their goal-setting learning.

The other pilot project is the collaboration of a group of eleven Thai Universities operating through the English language centers or responsible English units for admission in the use of FRELE-TH (2017) in the development of English standardized tests for direct admissions based on mutual recognition. Thereby, the results of students' performance can be benchmarked and accepted among the participatory universities. Therefore, students applying for university admissions will take an English test at one of the participatory universities and they can use the results to present to another in the group. Apart from university admissions, the participatory universities have agreed on aligning to and developing English courses and programs based on the FRELE-TH (2017) and some of them are developing the standardized tests for the exit of the university graduates or as evidence of their English ability levels for presenting to the prospective employers in their job applications or further study. Regarding students, they are likely to learn and perform better in English. With the results of the university admission, students are able to set their goals in learning English at the university as they should have some professions they would like to do upon graduation and they have more information on what skills they need to improve to reach the levels suggested or required by the professions.

For teachers and policy makers, they can set educational objectives based on more realistic and practical outcomes and design formative and summative assessments by negotiating with students and relating them to FRELE-TH levels and the standards expected by the professions. Based on students' profiling, teachers have substantial grounds in giving feedback to students, encouraging their goal setting inclination to foster their lifelong learning attitude.

Conclusion

In this respect, the FRELE-TH (2017) can be used as a basis of the English Educational Reform. It is the starting point of discussion among the stakes in English education, serving as a framework which can be benchmarked with the CEFR (Council of Europe, 2001) an international standard. With this international benchmark, it brings the learning and testing activities with the quality standards of assessment close to the real-world activities. With the FRELE-TH (2017), Thai learners or users of English can take suitable steps towards the standard levels needed or required in their special context. This information plays an important role in life-long learning because students can set their goals for their learning and can become the master of their own learning and self development toward their actual communication. Teachers can support students by engaging students in communication activities and situations where students can exploit any linguistic and strategic resources available to achieve their goals.

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