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Students' Perceptions with Different CEFR Levels on Foreign Teachers Using L1 in EFL Instruction

Kiki Juli Anggoro^{*1}
Anh Nguyet Nguyen²

¹Department of Languages, School of Languages and General Education, Walailak University, Nakhon Si Thammarat, 80161, THAILAND
²Department of Modern Languages, Post-Graduate Faculties, Catholic University of Murcia, Guadalupe, 30107, SPAIN

Abstract

The demand for foreign teachers of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) has been high in non-English speaking countries, including Thailand. As foreigners have resided in the country for several years, they picked up students' first language (L1) competence. Several foreign teachers, to some extent, utilized this mastery of L1 to assist the English instruction. This research aimed to explore how students with different Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) levels perceive foreign English teachers' use of L1. Three hundred twenty students from Walailak University participated in the survey. A quantitative survey and qualitative interview were used to collect data. Descriptive and inferential statistics were performed to analyze quantitative data, while content analysis was administered to investigate the qualitative data. The quantitative findings revealed a significant difference in students' perceptions, Welch's $F(2,68.42)=11.304, p < .05$. The qualitative findings exposed that students in level A1 had significantly different perceptions compared to those in levels A2 and B1. Students who supported L1 integration disclosed that it ameliorated communication, enhanced learning motivation, and improved academic achievement. Additionally, students who opposed L1 expressed that English's full usage developed their learning motivation and academic accomplishment.

* Corresponding author, email: kiki.an@mail.wu.ac.th

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1. INTRODUCTION

There lies no point in denying that English has become an essential means of communication, especially in this globalizing era, in which all countries, including Thailand, are no exception (Prapphal, 2003). Nevertheless, English language teaching in Thailand generally comprises outdated grammar-translation instructions that put little emphasis on authentic communication or oral language skills (Kwangawad, 2017). As a result, a lack of English communicative skills, including writing and speaking, have been detected (Flammer, 2013). According to Medgyes (2001), foreign teachers of EFL are believed to be more effective in teaching language learning strategies, providing more information about the English language, and more sensitive in anticipating students' learning difficulties needs. Therefore, most public and private educational facilities are currently hiring foreigners to teach English (Hickey, 2014). More recently, Taylor (2019) reported that Thailand's Office of the Basic Education Commission had allocated more funds to bring more foreign EFL teachers in the coming years.

One of the primary reasons to bring foreign EFL teachers to Thai educational institutions is to improve students' English proficiency and boost their confidence ("Embassies urged," 2020). Taylor (2019) reported that the Thai government would hire more foreign English teachers in order to improve the English communication skills of Thai students. Several researchers (Alseweed, 2012; Park, 2009; Sung, 2010; Wu & Ke, 2009) argued that foreign EFL teachers have more exciting teaching methods, are friendlier, and can provide students with a relaxing classroom atmosphere. Foreign teachers can also provide an environment where students can use the target language or L2 (Wigford, 2014). According to Cook (2001), students' exposure to L2 is vital in acquiring the language, and it should be used as much as possible. However, this might not benefit all students since Carson and Kashiwara (2012) pointed out that students at the beginner level prefer the support of their mother tongue or L1, while students with higher proficiency do not require L1 support.

As a controversial topic in the English as a Foreign Language (EFL) context, it is interesting to investigate perceptions of involved individuals in this matter, mainly because recent corpus on this issue is hardly available. Therefore, this research aimed to investigate students' perceptions of foreign teachers using L1 in EFL classes. What makes this study novel is the context and the use of Common European Framework Reference (CEFR) levels to categorize students' perceptions. There has not been a study on Thai students' perception of foreign teachers using L1 in EFL instruction, particularly where CEFR level is included. CEFR groups language users into six levels, namely A1, A2, B1, B2, C1, and C2, and each level contains specific descriptions about language knowledge, skills, and competencies that an individual can perform (Council of Europe, 2001). The categorization of perception based on CEFR levels can provide more precise and more comprehensive classroom use implications. The following is the research question of this study.

1. How do students with different English proficiency levels perceive the use of L1 in EFL instructions?

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

From the introduction, further discussion on several topics is imperative. The topics include foreign EFL teachers in Thailand, understanding learners' L1, support for L2 approach, support for L1 and L2 approaches, and Common Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR).

2.1 Foreign EFL Teachers in Thailand

It has been reported that there would be more teaching occupations available for foreign EFL teachers in Thailand in the coming years (Taylor, 2019). Hence, there is a need to boost the English language skills of students across Thailand. A report conducted by Prapphal (2003) showed that Thai graduates often need more practice in English communicative skills. Later work by Puengpipattrakul et al. (2007) also indicated the same, which means that there had not been major changes in Thai graduates' English proficiency during the four years. As a result, foreign EFL teachers, both native and non-native, have become a research topic of interest for many scholars. It is believed that Thai EFL teachers' instructional practices are not as deep and reflective (Songsirisak, 2017). Furthermore, many researchers (Alseweed, 2012; Park, 2009; Sung, 2010; Wu & Ke, 2009) argued that foreign EFL teachers have more stimulating teaching methods, are approachable, and can provide students with a comforting classroom ambiance. Nevertheless, there has been relatively limited literature on students' perspectives toward foreign EFL teachers in Thailand.

2.2 Understanding Learners' L1

Looking at the history of language teaching in general, native language profoundly influences L2 learning. However, it was strictly prohibited in the old days that learners used their L1 during language classes. Therefore, it has been a controversial area regarding 'to use or not to use' native language in foreign language classes (Kalanzadeh et al., 2013). Some theories have advocated that monolingual approaches are the best, and the fewer exposure students have with their L1, the better they would learn L2 (Cook, 2001; Krashen, 2003; Mart, 2013). Nevertheless, several linguistic experts and managerial educators have argued against the total elimination of L1 from L2 courses, and they believe that a well-planned use of L1 could lead to positive results (Ibrahim, 2019; Larsen-Freeman, 2001; Nation, 2003). Simultaneously, it has been assumed that learners do need to rely on their native language (Kalanzadeh et al., 2013).

Most of the time, it has been reported by both students and teachers that they support the use of L1 in English classes (Carson & Kashihara, 2012; Kieu, 2010; Tang, 2002). It emerged from Carson and Kashihara's study in 2012 that students at the beginner level prefer the support of L1 so they can rely on it, while students with higher proficiency did not need L1 support. Recently, Saruwatashi (2020) also concluded that task explanations and classroom management need the use of L1. Similarly, Chabert and Agost (2020) explored that L1 could be included in the Communicative Language Teaching approach for positive results. Furthermore, L1 is necessary for some situations of English teaching. In the study conducted by Kieu (2010), teachers stated that L1 was included in their teaching methods and could have a positive vibe in their

classroom. This finding is congruous with that of [Schweers \(1999\)](#), who found that when students' L1 was used in English classes, it led to students' positive learning attitudes and became a kind of encouragement. Two more reasons for having L1 in the L2 classroom were added by [Tang \(2002\)](#), which were more time-saving and effective. However, students can be reluctant to use their L1 in EFL classrooms ([Nazary, 2008](#)).

2.3 Support for L2 Approach

There are three fundamental principles of using solely English in an EFL classroom, presented by [Miles \(2004\)](#) as follows:

1. Modeling the learning of L1 in teaching L2 (maximizing students' exposure to L2).
2. Separating L1 and L2.
3. Emphasizing the need for students to use L2 in future communication continuously.

The first principle is taken from observing a child acquiring his or her mother tongue, representing how humans learn a language when surrounded by a sound environment. During childhood, one could master the L1 only by imitating and responding to others. Accordingly, [Cook \(2001, p. 406\)](#) believed that students' exposure to L2 is vital in acquiring the language, and it should be used as much as possible. Holding similar ideas, [Krashen \(2003\)](#) asserted that in second language learning, the primary causative component is understandable input, which means the input of solely L2 would make the success of learning a foreign language possible. The second principle can be understood by [Cook's \(2001\)](#) explanation that L1 could be a substantial barrier to learning L2.

Similarly, [Krashen \(2003\)](#) emphasized that L1 only leads to errors when learners perform in L2. He reported that as students and teachers kept trying to translate between L1 and L2, they would stumble more in using the language. The last principle is a product of the belief that if only L2 is used in EFL classrooms, students will be more likely to function naturally in English even outside the classroom ([Littlewood, 2013](#)) and understand the usage of the target language as a whole ([Pachler & Field, 2001](#)). With the same academical ideas, [Sinha et al. \(2009\)](#) pointed out that L1 can only impact L2 acquisition negatively, as (1) Asian students' alphabetical shapes and structures of L1 would create interference, and (2) other subjects at school are primarily taught in L1, which does not provide L2 learners with enough exposure. Earlier in the same year, [İpek \(2009\)](#) noted that most of the time, people would use 'L2 learning' and 'L2 acquisition' interchangeably; that is why sometimes, it is believed that L1 should be put inside L2 learning. [Polio and Lee \(2019\)](#) stated that second language acquisition theories do not allow the use of L1 in classrooms because L2 should advocate completely in listening and speaking of learners. [Hawks \(2001\)](#) added that only if teachers can speak L1 at a mastery level can the use of L1 benefit the students, or else it might hinder the learning process of L2.

2.4 Support for L1 and L2 Approaches

Despite the theories mentioned above, ironically, for most L2 learners, complete advocacy of the second language typically leads to encountering errors, which would result in an interlanguage situation, where L1 and L2 would be used interchangeably in the classroom to correct the mistakes ([Hitotuzi, 2006](#)). Moreover, [Kieu \(2010\)](#) pointed out three main points to counter those who support excluding L1 from the

classroom. First, it is impractical for a sole approach of L2 (Phillipson, 2001). Also, excluding L1 in lower-level EFL classes is practically impossible (Lamb, 2017). Second, there have been many criticisms about the idea that maximizing students' exposure to L2 would lead to succeeding in learning L2. Phillipson (2001) pointed out that there is no evidence proving the correlation between the quantity of L2 input and the academic success of L2. He further explained that it is essential to increase L2 input, but other aspects should also be considered, such as the quality of teaching materials and teaching methods. Lastly, L1 is undoubtedly a part of everyone's experience, which they will bring along into the classroom (Šikloši, 2015). This author also claimed that L1 is beneficial as it could help learners discover and create more throughout English acquisition. Likewise, Holthouse (2006) indicated that if teachers allow their students to use L1 occasionally, they could express what was really in their minds. On top of that, this author said it would be time-saving to use L1 in explaining the theory of L2.

2.5 Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR)

CEFR has been widely used worldwide and has impacted language standards, curricula, and revision reform (North, 2014). While its initial aim was for Europe, this structure is internationally embraced (North, 2014). The welcome given to it is due to its emphasis on what can be achieved rather than on what cannot for language speakers (Byram & Parmenter, 2012). The most prominent part of the framework is its vertical dimension, which includes six proficiency levels ranging from A1 to C2 (Huhta, 2012) (see Table 1).

Table 1. CEFR levels on a global scale (Source: Council of Europe, 2001, p. 24)

Proficient User	C2	Can understand with ease virtually everything heard or read. Can summarise information from different spoken and written sources, reconstructing arguments and accounts in a coherent presentation. Can express him/herself spontaneously, very fluently, and precisely, differentiating finer shades of Proficient meaning even in more complex situations
	C1	Can understand a wide range of demanding, longer texts, and recognise implicit meaning. Can express him/herself fluently and spontaneously without much obvious searching for expressions. Can use language flexibly and effectively for social, academic, and professional purposes. Can produce clear, well-structured, detailed text on complex subjects, showing controlled use of organizational patterns, connectors, and cohesive devices
Independent User	B2	Can understand the main ideas of complex text on both concrete and abstract topics, including technical discussions in his/her field of specialisation. Can interact with a degree of fluency and spontaneity that makes regular interaction with native speakers quite possible without strain for either party. Can produce clear, detailed text on a wide range of subjects and explain a viewpoint on a topical issue giving the advantages and independent disadvantages of various options.
	B1	Can understand the main points of clear standard input on familiar matters regularly encountered in work, school, leisure, etc. Can deal with most situations likely to arise whilst traveling in an area where the language is spoken. Can produce simple connected text on topics which are familiar or of personal interest. Can describe experiences and

Table 1 continued...

	B1	events, dreams, hopes, and ambitions and briefly give reasons and explanations for opinions and plans.
Basic User	A2	Can understand sentences and frequently used expressions related to areas of most immediate relevance (e.g., very basic personal and family information, shopping, local geography, employment). Can communicate in simple and routine tasks requiring a simple and direct exchange of information on familiar and routine matters. Can describe in simple terms aspects of his/her background, immediate environment, and matters in areas of immediate Basic need.
	A1	Can understand and use familiar everyday expressions and very basic phrases aimed at the satisfaction of needs of a concrete type. Can introduce him/herself and others and can ask and answer questions about personal details such as where he/she lives, people he/she knows, and things he/she has. Can interact in a simple way provided the other person talks slowly and clearly and is prepared to help.

3. METHODS

3.1 Research Design

This study deploys the notion of mixed-method research to describe students' perceptions of foreign teachers using L1 in EFL instructions. According to [Creswell & Clark \(2007, p. 5\)](#), a mixed-method research design is "a procedure for collecting, analyzing, and mixing both quantitative and qualitative methods in a single study or a series of studies to understand a research problem". Mixed-method research strengthens the triangulation of data ([Creamer, 2018](#)). As a result, trustworthiness is achieved ([Korstjens & Moser, 2018](#)). This research utilizes explanatory sequential design or explanatory mixed-method research design from several types of mixed-method research design. [Gay et al. \(2011\)](#) explain that this design can be used to explain results by gathering quantitative data from a survey to identify how several groups compare to a variable and then by following up through qualitative interviews to explore reasons for the comparison result. In short, quantitative data are collected first and are more heavily weighted than qualitative data ([Gay et al., 2011](#)).

3.2 Participants

Three hundred twenty students aged 19 to 21 years old, 221 females and 99 males, participated in the survey. The students were first and second year students at Walailak University, Thailand, taking General English (GE) courses in Term 2. Concerning CEFR, only three different levels were present, namely A1 (128), A2 (165), and B1 (27). Several students representing each CEFR level were purposively selected for the interview. The students' CEFR levels were categorized based on the result of their English proficiency test.

3.3 Data Collection

A questionnaire consisting of closed and open sections was utilized to collect data. A five-point Likert scale was used in the closed section comprising 20 statements. The questions are related to the use of L1 in EFL classes. For instance, students were

given a statement, “I think it is important for my teacher to understand the Thai language,” and asked to select an option that came closest to their opinion. The options were Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Undecided (U), Disagree (D), or Strongly Disagree (SD). Table 2 shows more sample statements in the survey. In addition to the closed section, respondents were asked to elaborate their perceptions in the open section. Three experts then analyzed the designed questionnaire by using an index of item objective congruence (IOC). The approved questionnaire was then given to different groups of students taking different English courses using Google Form. Additionally, semi-structured interviews were administered to purposively selected individuals for further investigation. The interview was recorded and transcribed.

Table 2. Sample survey statements.

No	Statements
1	I am happy when my teacher uses the Thai language in English classes.
2	I feel more comfortable when my teacher can speak the Thai language.
3	I feel less anxious when my teacher talks to me in the Thai language.
4	I am more confident to practice speaking English if my teacher can understand the Thai language.
5	My English class will be less stressful if my teacher knows the Thai language.
6	I learn more quickly when my teacher explains in the Thai language.
7	I understand the lesson more easily when the Thai language is used.
8	I learn more comprehensively when the Thai language is used.
9	I develop my English-speaking skills more when the Thai language is used during lessons.
10	I think it is important for my teacher to speak the Thai language.

3.4 Data Analysis

Descriptive and inferential statistics were performed to interpret gathered quantitative data. The reliability test shows Cronbach’s alpha of .86, which indicates a high internal consistency level for our scale with the specific sample (George & Mallery, 2006). The Welch ANOVA test and Games-Howell Post Hoc test were administered since the homogeneity of variance was not met. For the qualitative data collected through open-ended surveys and interviews, content analysis was undertaken. Rose et al. (2014, p. 1) stated that “content analysis refers to a family of procedures for the systematic, replicable analysis of the text”. Content analysis can also be applied to investigate both texts’ substantive and form features that refer to what is being conveyed in the message and how it is being conveyed, respectively (Schreier, 2012). In this research, there was a reduction done to opt for which data was significant. After that, data were categorized into several groups.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Quantitative Phase

Table 3 shows the generated descriptive data based on CEFR categorization. Table 3 indicates that students in A1 level ($M = 4.17$, $SD = .70$) had a higher average score on the measure of the foreign teachers using students’ L1 in EFL instructions than those in A2 ($M = 3.89$, $SD = .78$) and B1 ($M = 3.2$, $SD = 1.02$). Also, Table 3 shows that the higher the level, the lower the mean is and vice versa. The lower the

level, the more positive students' perception is towards foreign teachers using L1 in EFL instructions. Moreover, Table 4 indicates the unequal distribution of subjects based on the CEFR level and shows that the data do not meet the homogeneity standard, $F(2, 317) = 3.38, p = .035$. Therefore, Welch ANOVA was used.

Table 3. Descriptives.

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error	95% Confidence Interval for Mean		Minimum	Maximum
					Lower Bound	Upper Bound		
A1	128	4.1719	.70204	.06205	4.0491	4.2947	2.00	5.00
A2	165	3.8909	.78636	.06122	3.7700	4.0118	1.25	5.00
B1	27	3.2963	1.05620	.20327	2.8785	3.7141	1.00	5.00
Total	320	3.9531	.81410	.04551	3.8636	4.0427	1.00	5.00

Table 4. Test of homogeneity of variances.

		Levene Statistic	df1	df2	Sig.
TH	Based on Mean	3.382	2	317	.035
	Based on Median	2.577	2	317	.078
	Based on Median and with adjusted df	2.577	2	277.359	.078
	Based on trimmed mean	3.193	2	317	.042

Table 5 confirms a significant difference between groups, Welch's $F(2,68.42)=11.304, p < .05$. Therefore, there might be one or more groups that score significantly differently. To understand deeper, Games-Howell is utilized. Games-Howell is utilized because of the unequal distribution of participants from each CEFR level.

Table 5. ANOVA results.

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	18.412	2	9.206	15.120	.000
Within Groups	193.010	317	.609		
Total	211.422	319			

Table 6. Robust tests of equality of means.

	Statistic ^a	df1	df2	Sig.
Welch	11.304	2	68.421	.000

*. Asymptotically F distributed.

Table 7. Multiple comparisons.

	(I) CEFRlv	(J) CEFRlv	Mean Difference (I-J)	Std. Error	Sig.	95% Confidence Interval	
						Lower Bound	Upper Bound
Games-Howell	A1	A2	.28097*	.08717	.004	.0756	.4863
		B1	.87558*	.21253	.001	.3525	1.3986
	A2	A1	-.28097*	.08717	.004	-.4863	-.0756
		B1	.59461*	.21228	.023	.0720	1.1172
	B1	A1	-.87558*	.21253	.001	-1.3986	-.3525
		A2	-.59461*	.21228	.023	-1.1172	-.0720

*. The mean difference is significant at the 0.05 level.

Post hoc comparison, using the Games-Howell post hoc procedure, as shown in Table 6, indicates that A1 students' perception is significantly different from A2 ($p < .05$) and B1 ($p < .05$). Also, A2 students' perception is significantly different from A1 ($p < .05$) and B1 ($p < .05$).

These statistics point out that students with different CEFR levels show significantly different perceptions of the foreign teachers' use of L1 in EFL classrooms. McLeod (2019) states, a Likert scale shows that an attitude's strength/intensity is linear. Hence, Table 2 indicates that the lower the CEFR level, the higher the perception. Also, A1 ($M = 4.17$) and A2 ($M = 3.89$) students show positive attitudes towards L1. This finding is congruous with that of Tang (2002) and Carson and Kashihara (2012). In addition, the finding that B1 students had a low perception supports that of Norman (2008) and Carson and Kashihara (2012). Another exploration of students' perceptions was performed qualitatively to gather more comprehensive results.

4.2 Qualitative Phase

Students expressed their thoughts on foreign EFL teachers using L1 during the lesson in the survey's open-ended section and further interviews. In the A1 level, approximately 70% of the students mentioned that the utilization of L1 in their English classes is necessary; 20% expressed that it is not necessary; 10% did not leave any response. In the A2 level, approximately 60% of respondents expressed the necessity of using L1, 30% rejected L1, 10% did not respond. In the B1 level, a little over 20% conveyed that L1 may enhance their learning experience, while 80% strongly mentioned that foreign teachers must not use their L1 during the lesson. In conclusion, most A1 and A2 respondents express that the utilization of their L1 by their foreign teachers in English classes is necessary. However, the majority in the B1 level think otherwise.

Students' perceptions were further investigated. The perceptions are mainly grouped into positive and negative, and further analysis was administered to categorize perceptions in each group. In the positive group, the perceptions are categorized into three: communication, motivation, and accomplishment. In the negative group, there are motivation and accomplishment.

4.2.1 Students' positive perceptions

Most students in A1 and A2 level disclosed their positive perceptions towards the use of their L1 by foreign teachers in their English classes. This finding is congruous with that of Carson and Kashihara (2012). The positive responses are separated into three groups, namely communication, motivation, and accomplishment. Concerning communication, students revealed that it was hard for them to understand the teachers while explaining. Some students commented (P refers to Perception):

- P1 Thai will make it easier to communicate in hard-to-understand topics.
- P2 I want to mix the Thai language because some people may not understand.

When they could not comprehend, they were unable to ask because they could not speak English. A student said:

- P3 It is necessary for a part because some people, including me, sometimes don't dare to ask English words.

A few students highlighted that communication in the class was mostly one-way. While the teacher was giving instructions, the students had no idea what to do. A student mentioned doing a game in class. He conveyed that the game was fun, but it took them much time to comprehend what the game was about and what the teacher wanted them to do. He commented:

- P4 I like games. But. Sometimes cannot understand instructions.

Most of the time, the students would use Google Translate in class to comprehend the instructions. Therefore, they revealed that if the teacher could speak a little Thai, the communication would go more smoothly and take less time. A student highlighted that considering the amount of time they had and the topics they needed to cover in each lesson, full English delays the learning target. This finding supports [Tang \(2002\)](#), who found that when L1 is used in L2 classrooms, the lesson becomes more effective and less time-consuming.

The difficulty in communication further affects the students' motivation. This finding is in line with [Schweers \(1999\)](#), who claimed that using L1 encourages students in English classes. Most A1 and A2 students exposed that they did not enjoy English classes because they could not understand. A student suggested:

- P5 Thai language makes explaining things more understandable. It also makes students more willing to study.

Additionally, they did not dare to ask the teacher when they had questions or were confused because they did not know how to say it. Hence, they expected their EFL teachers to understand and speak a little Thai. A student commented:

- P6 Necessary, because students can know about their studies. When students don't know, they can ask in Thai first.

Several students further conveyed that they would feel less anxious if the teachers could understand them. A student shared his experience with a foreign teacher who spoke a little Thai and conveyed that the teacher made the class less stressful. He further shared that the teacher could be close to the students in the class because the students were not afraid to communicate with him. The student said:

- P7 The Thai language makes me comfortable in English class.

Motivation leads to learning accomplishment. Most respondents from A1 and A2 levels mentioned that it was difficult for them to understand their teachers during the class mainly because of their lack of English proficiency. They expressed that they were not able to comprehend the content of the lesson. Several students disclosed that they could not internalize the vocabulary, grammar, and instructions mentioned because of their low English proficiency level. A student commented:

- P8 I think it is necessary because some people are weak in language causing delays and confusion in learning.

Moreover, several respondents highlighted that they could not listen to English to get anything from the class. Therefore, most students conveyed that they could understand and learn more when some teachers used a little Thai in their English classes. A student expressed:

P9 When students do not know the way to explain in English and they use the Thai language. Students can understand more if the teacher knows Thai.

Many stated that when learning difficult vocabulary and grammar points, the use of a little Thai helped them comprehend more to get better scores. Some students expressed:

P10 Need to know Thai because if the students (in vocabulary) don't really know its meaning, teachers will be able to tell in Thai correctly.

P11 This is necessary because when grammar is too difficult it can be explained more clearly.

This finding is in line with that of [Cook \(2001\)](#) that L1 can positively affect English classes, particularly for conveying meaning and teaching grammar. They further expressed that they could get better grades in English subjects whose teachers could speak a little Thai. Hence, the students conveyed that the utilization of their L1 by their foreign teachers was a necessity. This finding supports previous findings ([Carson & Kashihara, 2012](#); [Tang, 2002](#)) that the strategic use of L1 has positive effects on students' accomplishments in English classes.

Nonetheless, they highlighted that they demanded the teachers understand and speak only a little of their L1. Most did not expect the teachers to speak frequently and fluently. Some students said:

P12 They don't need to master it, if they can use it a little bit is ok.

P13 There must be some, about 10-20%.

The students expressed that the slight integration of their L1 could enhance their overall English learning experience. When asked further about this, some mentioned that teachers should only speak Thai to help explain complex concepts, including vocabularies and grammar, to make jokes so that the class atmosphere became less stressful, and occasionally complimented or gave feedback.

4.2.2 *Students' negative perceptions*

Several students did not support the use of L1 in their English classes. The vast majority of B1 respondents rejected the notion of L1 use in their EFL instruction. This finding is congruous with that of [Norman \(2008\)](#) and [Carson and Kashihara \(2012\)](#) that students with higher English proficiency levels demand lesser use of L1 in English classes. One reason was motivation. Students revealed that the use of Thai during English class could hinder their motivation to speak English. When asked whether the English teacher should speak Thai, some students responded:

P14 No, because it made me try to communicate more.

P15 Not necessary, because English is something that students should learn. The more teachers speak English, the better it will be for students.

Moreover, some stated that some of their friends became lazy to try to speak English when the teacher could understand them when they communicated in Thai. A student commented:

P16 If the teacher speaks or understands Thai very well, the students will not try to speak English.

They further expressed that the use of L1 worsened the motivation to attempt to learn English. This finding supports that of Norman (2008), who reported that a group of students were lazy to speak English when the teacher spoke in their L1.

Most B1 students conveyed that they strongly disagreed when foreign EFL teachers did not speak fully in English during the lesson. It was because the teachers were expected to give more English language exposure to the students. They expressed that it was difficult for them to get English exposure outside the class because they were in a Thai-speaking environment. Therefore, they wanted the foreign teachers to provide the needed exposure to master the language. Some students said:

P17 I believe we all want to use English as much as we could.

P18 Foreign teachers do not need to be aware of the Thai language because they will practice their English skills to become better students.

Additionally, by not speaking in students' L1, the teachers could help students further develop their English skills to higher levels. A student suggested:

P19 EFL teachers should use the English language with students in order to improve their skills.

This finding is congruous with Norman (2008) that the use of L1 hinders the English learning of several students. It also supports the statement of Polio and Lee (2019) that the use of L2 provides necessary exposure for students' learning of speaking and listening skills.

The students' motivation leads to accomplishment. Some students expressed that though it felt like they were forced to speak English, they could see how the inexistence of L1 during English classes motivated them to try harder to learn more. Some students commented

P20 Without the Thai language, students will make an effort to understand and communicate in a foreign language.

P21 The more the teacher uses English, the more I learn.

This finding supports Carson and Kashihara (2012). Several B1 students highlighted that they preferred studying with foreign teachers who did not use their L1 in class because they felt their overall English skills improved. Also, other students disclosed that they had more opportunities to use the language orally in class so that they were able to develop their English-speaking skills. They confessed that they were not good at speaking English, but they wanted to try more. Therefore, they did not see why the teacher would speak in Thai during class when they wanted to communicate in English. A student pointed out:

P22 If we don't speak English in class, then why learn English?

In addition to speaking, several mentioned that they could improve their listening skills by making efforts to understand what the teacher was explaining. Though they required more time to acquire the content, they mentioned that it made their learning better because it made them attempt harder. This finding is in line with that of [Polio and Lee \(2019\)](#). A student highlighted:

P23 When the teacher speaks English slowly, I can understand and I think it improves my listening.

Nonetheless, some highlighted that foreign EFL teachers needed to detect the students' English proficiency level and not speak too fast or too slowly. Several A1 and A2 students shared that visual aids, including pictures and videos, are excellent alternatives to the Thai language when foreign teachers wanted to explain complex vocabularies or concepts. A student suggested:

P24 I think pictures and videos can help students understand difficult vocabulary and grammar.

All in all, students' perceptions of foreign EFL teachers using L1 are mixed. Some students consider it necessary, while others oppose the idea. Moreover, the lower the CEFR level, the higher the probability of supporting the use of L1. Also, the higher the level, the higher the probability of opposing L1 use in EFL classes. This finding is in line with previous research ([Carson and Kashihara, 2012](#); [Norman, 2008](#)). A1 and A2 students expect foreign EFL teachers to use a little Thai because it can assist better communication, enhance learning motivation, and increase academic accomplishment. This finding supports that of [Cook \(2001\)](#). Nonetheless, some students also report that the inexistence of L1 in their EFL class improves learning motivation and academic accomplishment. The vast majority of B1 students rejected the notion of L1 integration during English lessons. This finding is congruous with [Carson and Kashihara \(2012\)](#).

5. CONCLUSION

L1 use has been a controversial topic in the English language teaching context. This study found that based on CEFR categorization, students' perceptions on this matter vary. Descriptive statistics reveal that the lower the students' CEFR level, the higher the significance of L1 integration. More importantly, inferential statistics proved a significant difference in students' perceptions based on the CEFR level, Welch's $F(2,68.42)=11.304$, $p < .05$. Students in level A1 have significantly different perceptions compared to those in level A2 and B1. Concerning the qualitative findings, most students in lower levels, namely A1 and A2, confirm the significance of L1 in EFL learning. Foreign teachers who use a little Thai during class ease two-way communication, enhance learning motivation, and improve academic achievement. Nonetheless, the majority in B1 level and the minority in A1 and A2 consider L1 utilization an unnecessary trait of foreign EFL teachers. The full use of English develops their learning motivation and academic accomplishment. Students, mostly in the B1 level, convey that the use of Thai hinders their English learning.

In conclusion, the integration of L1 may benefit lower CEFR level learners. It serves as scaffoldings that help their learning process. It positively affects communication and students' motivation during lessons. Additionally, it enhances students' understanding of the lesson, which leads to higher achievement. It is

suggested that L1 can support complex vocabulary and grammar lessons. On the other hand, lesser or no L1 integration should be administered in classes with higher CEFR level students. It provides more language exposure and practice, enhancing their English mastery. The use of L2 encourages students to study harder, which results in higher motivation and achievement.

There are several limitations to the findings. One is the subjects' CEFR levels, which were limited to three, namely A1, A2, and B1. Higher CEFR levels were not detected. The other limitation is the unequal number of subjects based on the CEFR level; 51% were in level A2, 40% were in level A1, and 9% were in level B1. This limitation is an opportunity for future research, in which they can address the perceptions of students with higher CEFR levels.

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