

## Role of the CEFR and English Teaching in Thailand: A Case Study of Rajabhat Universities

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### ABSTRACT

In 2016, Thai Ministry of Education (MOE) has announced the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages or the CEFR (Council of Europe, 2001) as a guideline for teachers in primary and secondary schools. This has inevitably affected Rajabhat Universities (RUs) in the country that have major roles and responsibilities in producing pre-service English teachers. This paper presents the results of an investigation of English teachers' perceptions at Rajabhat universities in Bangkok and suburban areas. Participants were 67 teachers in total. A mixed-methods approach was employed for data collection. Research tools are a set of questionnaire and an individual semi-structured interview. An interview was conducted with 6 teachers in 6 RUs, each was purposively selected. Data analysis employed frequency, means, and standard deviation, while Grounded theory (Strauss & Corbin, 1999) was used for interview data analysis. Findings indicate the participants mostly agreed with the MOE's launching the CEFR policy and reflected they could apply the CEFR as a guideline in teaching and learning management. However, data from the in-depth interview revealed both advantages and disadvantages of the CEFR. This study might be a kind of mirror for policy makers and practitioners at both policy and classroom pedagogy levels who advocate the CEFR policy in Thailand.

### INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

Teaching and learning English in Thailand has been an essential issue of argument concerning the achievement of all stakeholders, and the students in particular. The stakeholders generally includes policy makers, teachers of English, learners, material developers, and other practitioners involved. For centuries, many theories and approaches of EFL, ELT, or TESOL (Kirkpatrick, 2007; Harmer, 2007; Hedge, 2000) including communicative language teaching or CLT (Ellis, 2008) have been employed and put in trial and error in English language classroom in Thailand (Chartrtrakul, 2009; Chartrtrakul, Anchaleewittayakul, Sukkara, Chirasawadi, & Deesiri, 2011; Prasansaph, 2009). The goal is to conquer the low success of Thai students in learning English.

However, the results of the achievement were still not satisfying. This can be confirmed by the results of teachers' English test which mostly was below the standard. Furthermore, the test of O-Net in English subject of students all over the country revealed unsatisfying results as well (Mala, 2016). This made Thai Ministry of Education laid a new policy in English language teaching and learning. For this reason, the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages or the CEFR was chosen to be a suitable English language framework for the current time of this research study. In year 2016, Thai Ministry of Education

(MOE) has announced the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages or CEFR (Council of Europe, 2001) as a guideline for teachers in primary and secondary schools for English classroom learning and teaching management (English Language Institute, 2016). Also, the MOE has published the manual for both school levels (English Language Institute, 2016). The questions are - "What is the CEFR?" and "Why did MOE choose it for English teachers and students in the country?"

To define, the CEFR is a guideline for the users and teachers of foreign languages to use as a map to examine communicative abilities in using the foreign language (Council of Europe, 2011). However, the CEFR does not mention about the approach or methodology of teaching and learning like CLT does, but it gives qualitative description for the users regarding learning, teaching and assessment. This language framework was introduced to foreign language teaching in 2001 by Council of Europe (Council of Europe, 2001) and was developed in 2011 (Council of Europe, 2011). This might be because many countries have applied the CEFR and given useful feedbacks. This Common Framework of Reference (CEFR) has become popular not only in Europe but in other countries as well since it provides a rather clear description of each level to follow and understand (Eleonora, 2015; Read, 2014; Weicheng, 2012) for any foreign languages.

To briefly explain, the CEFR provides three areas of description in using foreign languages. Concerning the CEF description, the “Global Scale” is provided with the “Can do” statements (Pearson Longman, 2013). The Global Scale is divided into three categories, namely, 1) Basic User (A1 and A2), 2) Independent User (B1 and B2), and 3) Proficient User (C1 and C2). To be specific, the CEF clearly defines what kinds of functions users “can do” at each six level. This includes competence to communicate effectively, skills and knowledge required for language learning, and communicative situations and context language being used (Pearson Longman, 2013). And this might be why MOE has made decision to choose the CEFR for English teachers in the country to use as a guideline in organising and managing teaching and learning in English classroom. The detailed description of each level will be discussed in the Literature Review section.

Consequently, the CEFR has played a significant role on the current English language policy. This has directly impacts on English teachers in the country in two main areas. They are 1) using the CEFR as the guideline for creating teaching and learning activities including assessment, and 2) improving their English language competence based on the Global Scale. This normally leads to teachers’ awareness in self and professional development.

Firstly, teachers needs to understand the “Can do” statements (Council of Europe, 2011) and develop their classroom practice to meet the CEFR levels, and secondly they also need to examine their own abilities of using English regarding this language framework. As thus, assessment comes in the view as the indicator to show both English competence of both teachers and their students. For example, the MOE has set the criteria for students in 3 levels. Students in Prathom 6 or Grade 6 and Mathayom 3 or Grade 9 should have communicative English abilities at A1 and A2 levels (Basic User) respectively, while Mathayom 6 or Grade 12 students are expected to reach B1 level (Independent User) (Maxwell, 2015; English Language Institute, 2016). Concerning the “Can do” statements in the CEFR, this could be advantageous for English teachers in giving guidelines to design course syllabus and organise classroom teaching in more practical context. However, it was questionable if MOE’s policy in CEFR implementation was in action or effective in Rajabhat Universities that hold the significant role in producing the vast number of future English teachers in the country. However, Liddicoat (2014) argues that the CEFR is not clear regarding teaching approach or methods as he said,

“In the CEFR, then, pedagogy is ambiguous in that it is both present and absent. It is present in that the Framework deal with questions of pedagogy but absent in that the very diverse approach of the document has very little to say about explicitly pedagogical choices,.....(Liddicoat, 2004 cited in Liddicoat, 2014)”

Secondly, regarding improving teachers’ English language competence based on the CEFR policy, MOE has laid the policy that teachers of English should pass the CEFR proficiency test at certain levels, that is, higher than B1, of course, with reference to the expectation on M.6 student ability of Independent User at B1 level. English teachers in the country, who were familiar with TOEIC, TOEFL, and IELTS as an

assessment of their English competence, now face another challenge of English self-assessment. Although all kinds of proficiency tests are necessary for English professional career, it could also turn out to be another burden for their professional development required by MOE, particularly for school teachers. This could be a challenge for Rajabhat Universities (RUs) which are mainly responsible for providing English Education Program all over the country.

Regarding to this, all 38 Rajabhat Universities in the country are institutes that directly responsible for providing teachers education. One of their major tasks is producing pre-service teachers and the future in-service teachers in teaching English. As thus, the CEFR policy that was launched in 2016 inevitably has influenced their educational management policy at university, curriculum design, and classroom practice levels. As thus, English Education Program at all RUs seemed to have two major goals to complete for their pre-service teacher-students. One is promoting their students to reach the level of expected English competence of the CEFR of MOE, and the other is providing English knowledge and pedagogy skill based on the CEFR descriptors. And this could be challenging difficulties in MOE’s CEFR policy implementation for teachers at RUs in spite of certain language organisations and practitioners have advocated the advantageous use of CEFR in language teaching (Eleonora, 2015; Tannenbaum & Wylie, 2014; English Language Institute, 2016).

This study aims to investigate English teachers’ perceptions on the CEFR as MOE’s policy and its implications in classroom teaching and learning. This study did not use English Test as a tool to determine level of English of the participants since we did not examine teachers’ English proficiency. Only teachers’ self-reflection of their own English competence and perceptions of the CEFR as MOE’s policy and its implications were explored.

## PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

This study aims to investigate English teachers’ perceptions on English teachers’ about the CEFR and its implications. The researchers employed only one research question to guide the study, that is, “How do English teachers in Rajabhat Universities perceive the CEFR and its implications at their universities?”

## RESEARCH METHOD

### Participants

A total of 67 English teachers filled in the questionnaire. Thirty-one teachers taught at Rajabhat Universities in Bangkok and 36 teachers worked at Rajabhat universities in suburban areas. As for the interview, totally 6 interviewees were purposively selected to participate in an individual interview. One teacher represented each university.

### Research Instruments

This study employed 2 research instruments for data collection which are a set of the questionnaire, and an individual

interview. Firstly, the questionnaire was used for quantitative data collection as this was a kind of survey research. However, a semi-structured interview was conducted individually for qualitative data collection. The purpose of the interview was to gain an in-depth data (Nunan, 1992, pp. 149-153) in particular areas of professional development.

### Data Collection and Analysis

This study employed mixed-methods approach (Creswell & Clark, 2011, p. 179) for data collection. The questionnaire was distributed to collect quantitative data whereas the individual interview was conducted for qualitative data in supporting reliability of quantitative data from the questionnaire. The research sites of this study were 8 Rajabhat Universities (RUs) in Thailand, 5 RUs in Bangkok, and 3 RUs in suburban areas. Seven Rajabhat Universities provided English Education Program, while the other one did not. Most of the participants in this study were English teachers who taught English to students in English Education Program.

For data analysis, descriptive statistics of percentages, means, and standard deviation (S.D.) were employed for quantitative data from the questionnaire. In addition, the researchers employed Grounded Theory (Strauss & Corbin, 1999) for qualitative data analysis from the interview by transcribing and using color coding procedure to categorize the themes and interpret the meanings of data gained.

### Findings

Findings gained from the study were reported in accordance to data collected, that is, the questionnaire and an individual interview. The questionnaire data were quantitatively analyzed and summarized. On the other hand, the interview data were analyzed using Grounded Theory (Strauss & Corbin, 1999). The report were presented in two aspects of data collection; the questionnaire and the interview.

### The Questionnaire

Data analysis from the questionnaire was divided into two parts, the participants' background information and their perspective views on professional development in their English teaching career.

### Participants' Background

Findings reveal that most of the respondents were female, and the majority of them aged between 25-45 years (74.6%), the rest were between 46-60 years. Most of the teachers earned master degrees (74.6%), and most of them were in Bangkok. Results also reveal that most respondents worked in Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences (73.1%) and only 26.9% worked for Faculty of Education. Regarding their teaching, 71.7% of the respondents were responsible for 1-3 subjects, only 26.8% taught more than 3 subjects each semester. In addition, findings show that 17.9% of the respondents used English and Thai in classroom teaching at the ratio of 30/70 %, 35.8% used 50/50 %, 23.9% spoke 70% English

respectively. It was interesting to find that only 9 % of the respondents spoke 80% of English compared to Thai (20%).

### Teachers' Perceptions on the CEFR and its Applications

The second part of the questionnaire examines the teachers' reflection on how the CEFR policy and its applications worked at their RUs. The results illustrated three areas that are 1) the CEFR policy, 2) the CEFR and its implications, and 3) their views about the Global Scale and "can do" statements. Likert rating scales were applied, and data analysis employed means. The mean scores were interpreted as the most applicable (4.21 – 5.00), more applicable (3.41 – 4.20), fairly applicable (2.61 – 3.40), less applicable (1.81 – 2.60), and the least applicable (1.00 – 1.80) in Table 4.1 below:

Table 4.1 above indicates that regarding the CEFR policy, the respondents perceived that it was fairly applicable about being informed of the CEFR and CEFR policy launching by the Ministry of Education ( $\bar{x}$  =3.03, 3.39 respectively). Moreover, a lot of them viewed that it was fairly applicable for them about passing the CEFR Test at C1 level ( $\bar{x}$  =3.73). Concerning the CEFR implications, the results showed that respondents perceived that it was fairly applicable in putting the CEFR into practice in curriculum planning and classroom practice ( $\bar{x}$  =3.40). However, the results showed that they all still viewed that it was more applicable for the CEFR's practicality, and might use it as a guideline in designing their course syllabus ( $\bar{x}$  =3.69, and 4.03 respectively).

In addition, the respondents agreed that it was more applicable that *the CEFR global scale and levels* provided them flexibilities in designing teaching and learning activities for their students ( $\bar{x}$  =3.96). In particular, they agreed that it was more applicable for them that *the CEFR global scale and levels* was not difficult to design and organise active learning activities to improve students' four skills – listening, speaking, reading, and writing ( $\bar{x}$  =3.72, 3.63, 3.72 and 3.52 respectively). Relating Global scale and "can do" statements, the respondents perceived it was more applicable regarding their benefits both for teachers to design the assessment test, and for students to assess their own English abilities ( $\bar{x}$  =3.76, and 3.79 respectively). In addition, the respondents agreed that it was more applicable to formally inform students about the "can do" statements in order to assess their own English abilities. Finally, they all viewed that it was important for pre-service teachers to understand and be able to apply the CEFR descriptions in their educational training and practicum.

To conclude, it was noticeable that no respondents viewed the policy, and implications of the CEFR lessor the least applicable. In other words, the results indicated that Global scale and "Can do" statements were beneficial for both teachers and students concerning the test and assessment design.

### The Interview

An individual interview was conducted to gain an in-depth perceptions of English teachers on their professional development. Six interviewees individually participated in the interview at their work places. All of them had TESOL,

**Table 4.1.** Teachers' perceptions on the CEFR and its applications

The CEFR Policy		Means		
		Bangkok N=31	Suburb N=36	Total N=67
1	Regarding the CEFR global scale and levels and the comparison of the CEFR levels and other international test scores ( <i>see attachments#1, 2 and 3</i> ), it is not difficult for you to pass the CEFR Test at C1 level.	3.90	3.58	3.73
2	You have been formally informed about using the CEFR as the guidelines in teaching English by the Ministry of Education (MOE).	2.90	3.14	3.03
3	You know that MOE has launched English teaching policy by using the CEFR levels for English teachers in secondary schools since 2016.	3.45	3.33	3.39
The CEFR and its implications		Means		
		Bangkok N=31	Suburb N=36	Total N=67
4	Looking at <i>the CEFR global scale and levels attached</i> , you might use it as a guideline in designing English curriculum/program you are responsible.	4.10	3.97	4.03
5	Looking at <i>the CEFR global scale and levels attached</i> , you might personally apply descriptions in each level/skill to design your course syllabus.	4.10	3.89	3.99
6	Looking at <i>the CEFR global scale and levels attached</i> , you think that the CEFR provide flexibilities for you in designing teaching and learning activities for your students.	4.03	3.89	3.96
7	Looking at listening description in the CEFR levels attached, it is not difficult for you to design and organise active learning activities to improve your students' listening skill.	3.74	3.69	3.72
8	Looking at the two sets of speaking descriptions in the CEFR levels, it is not difficult for you to design and organise active learning activities to improve your students' speaking skill.	3.65	3.61	3.63
9	Looking at reading description in the CEFR levels, it is not difficult for you to design and organise active learning activities to improve your students' reading skill.	3.77	3.67	3.72
10	Looking at writing description in the CEFR levels, it is not difficult for you to design and organise active learning activities to improve your students' writing skill.	3.55	3.50	3.52
11	Looking at <i>the CEFR global scale and levels attached</i> , Global scale and "can do" statements are beneficial to teachers to design the assessment test for students.	3.81	3.72	3.76
Global scale and "can do" statements		Means		
		Bangkok N=31	Suburb N=36	Total N=67
12	Looking at <i>the CEFR global scale and levels attached</i> , Global scale and "can do" statements are beneficial to students to assess their own English abilities.	3.87	3.72	3.79
13	Students should be formally informed by the teacher about the "can do" statements in order to assess their own English abilities.	3.94	3.83	3.88
14	In your opinion, the CEFR is too ideal to put into practice in curriculum planning and classroom practice.	3.52	3.31	3.40
15	In your opinion, the CEFR is practical to put into practice in curriculum planning and classroom teaching and learning	3.71	3.67	3.69
16	It is important for pre-service teachers to understand and be able to apply the CEFR descriptions in their educational training and practicum.	4.06	4.03	4.04

TESL, or EFL degrees, and had experience of one or two kinds of English proficiency exams like IELTS, TOEFL, or TOEIC; but no one had applied for the CEFR exam. Moreover, most of them are holding or used to have administrative positions, for instance, being Chair of English Teaching Program. Findings revealed three areas of the participants' reflections on the CEFR policy at their institutes. They are: 1) the CEFR and the MOE's policy, 2) applying the CEFR

in classroom teaching and learning, and 3) the CEFR and the students-the pre-service teachers; as discussed below:

#### *The CEFR and the MOE's policy*

Findings showed all of them reflected that they were able to achieve the CEFR high levels since all of them had passed

other kinds of proficiency tests during their career professional path, such as TOEFL, IELTS, or TOEIC with high scores. Regarding the CEFR and the MOE policy, most participants agreed with MOE in launching the CEFR as the national English teaching policy. They agreed that the CEFR could be used as a guideline for teachers.

For instance, Ajarn Nina wholeheartedly support the implementation of the CEFR in that it provided high standard of English learning and proficiency test compared to other tests like TOEFL, IELTS, or TOEIC. Ajarn Nina, who taught more than ten year of English and the current head of English Program in Education, was selected to be the representative of her university to participate in a series of meetings organised by MOE before the Ministry had launched the CEFR policy in 2016. She also had a major role in conducting the CEFR trainings for teachers in primary and secondary schools nearby her university outskirt of Bangkok. The word “standard” and “guideline” were also favored by Dr. Pla who taught in Bangkok as she said, “it could help us teach our students up to an international standard.” Similarly, Dr. Aom explained that the CEFR was “not too broad or too specific and easy to follow” since it was not new to her as she knew it and was used to the term CEFR since she did her Ph.D. in Australia ten years ago. Even a young lady teacher, Ajarn Snow who appeared to be an active teacher and interested in using technology in teaching English, supported the CEFR policy. She has only been teaching English for 4 years at a RU near Bangkok. She said the CEFR was a good framework for teachers to follow.

However, two teachers from RUs in Bangkok did not agree with the CEFR policy. One was Dr. Kiti who totally thought that the CEFR was suitable for Thai students. Regarding, the CEFR descriptors in all 6 levels, that is, A1, A2, B1, B2, C1, and C2 totally start with and focus on listening and speaking skills (Cambridge ESOL, 2011). He viewed the CEFR is like other proficiency tests (TOEFL, IELTS, or TOEIC) that he had students who passed TOEFL test but very poor in writing skill. Dr. Kiti did not believe implementing the CEFR could make Thai students fluent in English speaking. He compared the Philippine native who use English fluently as an ESL. This might result from his being half Thai-Pilipino and studying in the Philippines for more than ten years. He said, “Thai students are afraid of speaking English, and they did not have confidence in communicating with foreigners.” He explained about assigning his students an interview project with visitors at Wat Pra Kaew (Emerald Buddha Temple), and his students did not like this project.

In addition, the other interviewee who did not think that the CEFR would work out well in English language teaching in Thailand was Dr. Wipa. Dr. Wipa used to be the head of English Program Education for more eight years and had quite a lot of experiences in pre-service teachers’ training. She said, “Whatever the MOE policy was, my pre-service teachers (her students) must use indicators (กระทรวงศึกษาธิการ, พ.ศ. 2551) in English curriculum as a guideline in lesson planning as well as making a test.” Dr. Wipa was concerned about the teachers’ English knowledge in that she wondered whether the teacher’s English proficiency had reached the CEFR standard or not, “it’s questionable.”

Moreover, she expanded that her English Program in Education staff have to be able to meet requirement of Thai Qualification Framework (TQF) in 4 areas: 1) linguistics, 2) culture, 3) four language skills, and 4) teaching methodology. According to Dr. Wipa, the CEFR policy seems to be another burden for her pre-service teachers’ training.

In sum, all participants reflected they were not worried about their English proficiency concerning the CEFR levels. Relating to the national CEFR policy, most participants agreed with the MOE’s launching policy of the CEFR implementation. In contrast, some experienced teachers were worried about their students’ English proficiency in two major roles, first as their students, and second as pre-service teachers who were expected to use English orally in their future practicum in year 4, and year 5-the final year of graduation.

### *Applying the CEFR in classroom teaching and learning*

According to the MOE’s launching the CEFR policy, there comes a question of “whether the CEFR would work out well in classroom implication.” Findings indicated two significant factors that could make this CEFR national policy effective, that are 1) teachers’ belief, and 2) teaching and learning methods.

Firstly, the teacher’s belief was outstanding in that it they perceived the CEFR implementation possible for their students to achieve English proficiency as indicated in all CEFR levels; however, the levels of might be lower than the MOE’s expectation (English Language Institute, 2016). In contrast, two participants from RUs in Bangkok did not believe in the usefulness of the CEFR. In fact, they were not concerned if there was the CEFR policy or not. For instance, Dr. Wipa indicated that her goal of teaching was to have her students acquire certain English proficiency in order to becoming good English pre-service teachers. Secondly, the results involved unavoidable issues of classroom teaching and learning methods. One interviewee, Ajarn Nina, advocated using commercial books which use CEFR in designing the content and the activities in the book. This was supported by Khoshhal (2016) who promoted using a ready-made resource book called Copy and Go 1 which used the CEFR as the functions of the book content and activities. On the other hand, Dr. Pla, who liked the “spoken interaction” description part, expressed that practical pedagogy could be employed in her classroom with the CEFR as the guideline. She said her students like her teaching speaking activities. Moreover, she added that For the English major students they could reach C1 level whereas the non-major students might reach at B1 or B2 levels. Overall, the results appeared all the interviewees were confidence in applying the CEFR in classroom teaching and most of them used at least 70 percent of English as a medium of instruction compared to Thai instruction. However, the barriers of the success of CEFR classroom implication seem to relate to the test. This will be discussed in the following part.

### *The CEFR and the students-the pre-service teachers*

The final reflection on implementing the CEFR in Rajabhat universities that provide English Program Education deals with

the students, to be specific the pre-service teachers. Findings reveals the participants' worriedness about their students when they went out for practice teaching at real schools. Their concerns deal with the students' English proficiency, making testing, and teaching methodology. Regarding English proficiency, findings showed that class-size of more than sixty made it difficult to teach students effectively. For example, Dr.Kiti said, "Students' confidence in speaking English is problematic as well as their attitude. But most of all, I think that a person has to love English first in order to be good at studying English."

The second difficulty of the CEFR policy in practice is making a test for pre-service teachers at their practice-teach primary schools. For example, Dr.Wipa explained that when making a test school teachers were required to use indicator-based in the curriculum designed by Basic Education Office. And passing the test was the indicator for students' success. In this perspective, it seems that the CEFR role just reach the stage of classroom practice and not the assessment.

Last but not least, findings indicated problems of pedagogical teaching skill could be an obstacle for the CEFR implications in RUs. For instance, Dr. Wipa explained that although her pre-service teachers had learned using classroom language and varieties of teaching methods, they preferred to use Thai with their young students. She said, "They rarely used English classroom language because using Thai helped them ended the lesson in time. They said it was difficult when using English though we already trained them in the course of teaching methodology." Similarly, Dr. Wipa, when visiting and observing her pre-service teachers at school, was concerned about her students preferred using traditional methods to activity-based teaching. Thus, the pre-service teachers mostly employed Thai language as a medium of instruction. Dr.Wipa added "We already taught them the 3Ps, warm-up, wrap-up, informations gap, or problem solving problem techniques, but they preferred having their kids doing only exercises."

In brief, the participants reflected their English proficiency not problematic regarding the CEFR standard since all of them had passed one or two type of English proficiency tests such as TOEIC, TOEFL, or IELTS even though no one has tried the CEFR test (Cambridge ESOL, 2011). Moreover, all of them perceived that the CEFR was a guideline and framework for helping in planning their less. As thus most the interviewees stated that they did not think it would be problematic in applying the CEFR in classroom teaching. However, there were two interviewees who did not think the CEFR would be practical for their students due to students' attitude toward English learning whereas the students – pre-service teachers – would have other criteria to achieve both the TQF and the indicator-based curriculum.

## DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

This study investigated teacher's reflection on the CEFR policy addressed by MOE. Findings revealed that, as experienced teachers, the teachers in this study viewed the CEFR policy was not a kind of new English guidelines to them. To be specific, it was practical for them to employ the CEFR descriptors all four skills –listening, speaking, reading, and

writing, in their classroom teaching. Most of participants agreed with the implementation of the CEFR, and one participant observed that it could bring up an international standard to their students' English competence. In particular, the intensity of actively joining ASEAN Community was one of reasonable factors for Thai students in well-preparation for English-speaking member. However, the interview findings indicated the participants' worriedness about their pre-service teachers. This concerned about both English knowledge and applying the CEFR at school once they practiced their internship or practicum.

Based on the purpose of the study, findings clearly showed that all the participants in the study were informed about the CEFR policy and its implementation by Ministry of Education. Moreover, findings from the questionnaire revealed that most of the respondents agreed with the CEFR policy ( $\bar{x} = 3.73$ ). Concerning teachers' English proficiency the results showed that most participants had entered and passed one or two kinds of English proficiency tests, for example, TOEIC, TOEFL, or IELTS. However, 9 % of the respondents never took any kinds of these proficiency tests; and interestingly, no respondent had taken the CEFR proficiency test (see Table 4.1). This raises a question of how the CEFR could be implemented effectively at their institutes which is applying the CEFR in English teaching and learning at RUs.

Regarding applying the CEFR in teaching and learning methods, findings indicated that this could be problematic. Although the overall findings from the questionnaire showed that the CEFR global scale and levels provided the teachers flexibilities in designing their teaching and learning activities ( $\bar{x} = 3.96$ ) which included all four skills of listening ( $\bar{x} = 3.72$ ), speaking ( $\bar{x} = 3.63$ ), reading ( $\bar{x} = 3.72$ ), and writing ( $\bar{x} = 3.52$ ) respectively (see Table 4.2), data analysis from the interview presented the contrary concerns. For instance, Dr.Kitti wholeheartedly disagreed with the implementation of the CEFR in all 6 levels (Cambridge ESOL, 2011). He explained that his students were poor in using English, particularly writing skill. This certainly deals with his belief and experience of teaching English at tertiary levels for more than ten years. Similarly, Dr.Wipa expressed that she did not think the CEFR policy would be effectively work out. Dr. Wipa had more than twenty-year experiences in English teaching, particularly pre-service teachers at her university. She supported her argument by referring to the Thai Qualification Framework or TQF required by MOE for English Education Program (EEP) at Rajabhat Universities all over the country. The TQF for EEP covers 4 areas of studies – linguistics, culture, language skills, and teaching methodology. Moreover, she asserted that it was difficult to apply CEFR for her students, the future-to-be English teachers both English proficiency and their ability to apply the CEFR at their practice-teach schools, particularly in making an English test for their students. This was supported by the investigation by Liddicoat (2014) about language policy implementation using the CEFR. Liddicoat states that the CEFR was "present" at macro or policy level; however, he argues that at pedagogical or micro level the CEFR was "absent." This means that practitioners or teachers who apply the CEFR for their

teaching guidelines might find it problematic in classroom practice. As Dr. Wipa pointed out particularly for per-service teachers at her university.

However, in our study Ajarn Nina who had been providing teacher trainings in CEFR advocated the CEFR policy. Ajarn Nina was also the Chair of EEP at one of RUs in the study, and she had significant role in a series of CEFR meeting organised by MOE before MOE's launching the CEFR. There were also other three interviewees who advocated the CEFR policy. Whereas Dr. Pla preferred the CEFR because its features of being "standard" and "guideline", Dr. Aom said that it was good because the CEFR was "not too broad or too specific and easy to follow." Similarly, Ajarn Snow, who had a few year-experience of English teaching, advocated the CERF because it provided "a good framework for teachers to follow." Relating to this, the CEFR could make contributions and stirring in the TESOL field for both language teaching and testing, particularly for teacher training (Figueras, 2012). This impact might be useful for policy makers at national levels in providing education to both pre-service and in-service teachers.

In brief, the CEFR policy challenged its effectiveness in implementation for English teachers at Rajabhat universities and other institutes all over the country. The findings in this study revealed both pros and cons of the CEFR applications, and this could be a challenge in confirming the gap between the policy maker at macro level and the teachers at the micro level (Liddicoat, 2014). In other words, bridging the gap between the CEFR policy and the classroom pedagogy levels might need certain kinds of program evaluation (Owen & Rogers, 1999) to examine its effectiveness in implementation in Thailand.

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