ENGLISH LANGUAGE ASSESSMENT POLICY AND AGENCY OF ENGLISH TEACHERS IN THAILAND

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นโยบายด้านการประเมินผลภาษาอังกฤษ
และฐานะผู้กระทำการของครูสอนภาษาอังกฤษในประเทศไทย

น.ส.เบญจมาศ ธรรมารุ่งเรือง

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แนวคิดเรื่องมนุษย์ในฐานะผู้กระทำการ (human agency) เป็นแนวคิดที่ได้รับความสนใจเพิ่มขึ้นเรื่อยๆในสาขาวิชาการศึกษาในช่วงทศวรรษที่ผ่านมา นักการศึกษาสาขาต่างๆ รวมทั้งสาขาการเรียนการสอนภาษาอังกฤษ ได้พยายามศึกษาเรื่องฐานะผู้กระทำการของครู (teacher agency) เนื่องจากแนวคิดนี้ ได้ถูกกล่าวถึงในนโยบายการศึกษา ซึ่งเน้นย้ำความสำคัญของการที่ครูเป็นผู้นำมาซึ่งความเปลี่ยนแปลง หรือ “agents of change” ทว่า นโยบายการศึกษามีผลทั้งในแง่บวกและแง่ลบต่อฐานะผู้กระทำการของครู เนื่องจากสิ่งที่เขียนขึ้นในนโยบายขัดแย้งกับบริบทของการเรียนการสอนที่ครูต้องพบเจอในความเป็นจริง ความขัดแย้งนี้ ประกอบกับการที่แนวคิดเรื่องฐานะผู้กระทำการของครูยังไม่เป็นที่เข้าใจอย่างแพร่หลายในประเทศไทย ทำให้เกิดช่องว่างระหว่างนโยบายและการปฏิบัติจริง

งานวิจัยชิ้นนี้จึงมีจุดประสงค์ที่จะสร้างองค์ความรู้ด้านแนวคิดเรื่องฐานะผู้กระทำการของครู ในบริบทที่เกี่ยวข้องกับนโยบายด้านการประเมินผลภาษาอังกฤษของการศึกษาระดับอุดมศึกษาในประเทศไทย เครื่องมือที่ใช้ในการรวบรวมข้อมูลประกอบด้วยแบบสอบถามและการสัมภาษณ์เชิงลึก จากการเก็บข้อมูลมีผู้ตอบแบบสอบถามจำนวน 63 คน และมีผู้ให้ข้อมูลในการสัมภาษณ์เชิงลึกจำนวน 26 คน โดยผู้เข้าร่วมงานวิจัยเป็นชาวไทยและชาวต่างประเทศที่เป็นครูสอนภาษาอังกฤษระดับอุดมศึกษาในสถาบันอุดมศึกษาของรัฐบาลและเอกชนในประเทศไทย ผลการวิจัยพบว่า ฐานะผู้กระทำการของครูนั้น นอกจากจะขึ้นอยู่กับปัจจัยส่วนบุคคลแล้ว ยังขึ้นอยู่กับปัจจัยทางด้านสิ่งแวดล้อม ซึ่งรวมถึงนโยบายด้านการประเมินผลภาษาอังกฤษด้วย โดยฐานะผู้กระทำการของครู สามารถจำแนกตามระดับที่นโยบายด้านการประเมินผลภาษาอังกฤษมีอิทธิพลต่อฐานะผู้กระทำการของครูได้เป็น 5 รูปแบบ อย่างไรก็ดี ผลการวิจัยพบว่าวัฒนธรรมหรือโครงสร้างของสถาบัน ส่งผลต่อฐานะผู้กระทำการของครูมากกว่าอำนาจหรือบัญญัติของนโยบาย

นัยสำคัญจากผลการวิจัยนี้มีอยู่ 2 ประการ ประการที่หนึ่ง การมีความเข้าใจในองค์ประกอบที่นำมาสู่ฐานะผู้กระทำการของครู ซึ่งส่งผลต่อคุณภาพของการเรียนการสอนภาษาอังกฤษ และความเข้าใจที่ดีขึ้นในเรื่องฐานะผู้กระทำการของครู จะช่วยให้ผู้วางแผนและร่างนโยบายการศึกษาสามารถกำหนดและบัญญัตินโยบายที่นำมาใช้ได้จริงในทางปฏิบัติ ประการที่สอง การสร้างและสนับสนุนให้สภาพแวดล้อมทางการศึกษาส่งเสริมฐานะผู้กระทำการของครูเป็นหน้าที่สำคัญของผู้บริหารสถาบันการศึกษา เมื่อครูได้รับนโยบายที่สามารถนำไปปฏิบัติได้จริง และมีสภาพแวดล้อมที่เอื้ออำนวยต่อการปฏิบัติงาน เมื่อนั้นครูก็จะสามารถเป็นผู้นำมาซึ่งความเปลี่ยนแปลง หรือ “agents of change” ได้อย่างเต็มที่ และบรรลุวัตถุประสงค์ของนโยบายด้านการประเมินผลภาษาอังกฤษที่มีต่อการเรียนการสอนภาษาอังกฤษในประเทศไทย

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สาขาวิชา	ภาษาอังกฤษเป็นภาษานานาชาติ	ลายมือชื่อนิสิต ....
ปีการศึกษา	2563	ลายมือชื่อ อ.ที่ปรึกษาหลัก ....
		ลายมือชื่อ อ.ที่ปรึกษาร่วม ....

5887845520 : MAJOR ENGLISH AS AN INTERNATIONAL LANGUAGE
KEYWORD: agency, teacher agency, English language education policy, English language assessment policy, Thailand's higher education

Benjamas Dhammarungruang : ENGLISH LANGUAGE ASSESSMENT POLICY AND AGENCY OF ENGLISH TEACHERS IN THAILAND . Advisor: Asst. Prof. JIRADA WUDTHAYAGORN, Ph.D. Co-advisor: Asst. Prof. CHATRAPORN PIAMSAI, Ph.D.

The concept of human agency has received increasing attention in the field of education in the past decade. Education researchers, those in the area of English language education included, have much to grapple with in exploring and conceptualizing agency of teachers—or teacher agency. This is because teacher agency has been emphasized in education policy, stressing the importance of teachers acting as "agents of change." Yet, ironically, education policy both enables and constrains teacher agency due to the conflicts between the rhetoric of policy text and the reality of teaching context faced by the teachers. This paradoxical situation, coupled with the lack of understanding of teacher agency, renders a persistent gap between policy and practice.

The current study thus aims to contribute to greater understanding of teacher agency in relation to an education policy—namely, the English language assessment policy of Thailand's higher education. Insights are gleaned from questionnaire surveys (n = 63) and in-depth interviews (n = 26) with English language teachers of various nationalities, currently teaching undergraduate-level English, from public and private higher education institutions across Thailand. Findings reveal that manifestation of teacher agency is contingent not only on personal but also on ecological factors, one of which being the English language assessment policy in focus of this study. Such manifestation can be categorized into five types according to the extent to which teacher agency is influenced by the policy. Even so, it appears that manifestation of teacher agency depends not so much on the direct demands of policy mandates as on the teachers' personal dispositions being mediated by the institutional culture and structure.

The implication from research findings is twofold. One, it is important to understand what constitutes teacher agency—how and how much it is enabled, constrained, exercised, achieved, and in the end translated into the quality of English language education. Better understanding of teacher agency could aid policy makers in future policy planning and drafting so as to formulate a policy that is practical and implementable. Two, it is important for institutional management to foster the creation and sustenance of an ecology that would enhance the achievement of teacher agency in the classroom as well as in the institution on the whole. When teachers are provided with viable plans and feasible means, then and only then can they fully act as "agents of change" who will bring about positive impact of the English language assessment policy on the overall English language education in Thailand.

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Field of Study:	English as an International Language	Student's Signature ....
Academic Year:	2020	Advisor's Signature .... Co-advisor's Signature ....

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I am admittedly at a loss for words when it comes to my family, who has always been the true wind beneath my wings. All of you have always been a great cheerleader in the background, and I can always look to you for comfort (and a box of chocolate). I would also like to take this opportunity to honor the two most important persons of my life—Mom and Dad. Both of you have laid out several paths for me, many of which you have traveled and struggled with me. There are times that I doubted we had gone off the path, but those roads less traveled have undoubtedly made my life richer and my self stronger. Without you, I would not have been—and become—who I am today. I cannot ever repay what you have done for me and given to me out of unconditional love, pure kindness, and unfailing care. Saying thank you would be too simple and underserving of a return, but that is the most I can do for you. I love you,

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Mom and Dad, and thank you for everything—everything.

I must also not forget another one of my stellar cheerleading team—my friends. All along my Ph.D. journey, I have received tremendous support from friends far and wide. It would not be possible to list all your names here, but please know that I truly appreciate your encouragement, consolation, and motivational boost. You all have made me realize the meaning of Walt Whitman's "I no doubt deserved my enemies, but I don't believe I deserved my friends." Thank you for being there for me through all my ups and downs, always.

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From the depths of my heart, thank you.

Benjamas Dhammarungruang

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CHAPTER I
INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the study

Charles Alderson, one of the most prominent figures in the field of language testing and assessment, made a remark in the special issue of *Language Testing in Asia* that:

> In education more generally, statements of aims, objectives and curricular frameworks are…widely provided, although the definitions and operationalisations of these may vary greatly. In second and foreign language education, there is a long tradition of stating expected levels of achievement, with or without reference to curricular objectives. (Alderson, 2017, p. 1)

Alderson's (2017) remark alludes to the convention of specification and benchmarking in education and calls attention to the fact that such convention is not necessarily followed through as intended, nor is its interpretation and use always consistent across applications. This convention, along with its consequences, stems from the practice of national or institutional authorities utilizing education policy as the driving—or, perhaps more fittingly, the governing—force of the education system, which is a practice that is perhaps not unfamiliar to practitioners in the realm of education, whether that of second and foreign language or otherwise.

As defined in Byram and Parmenter (2012b), a policy is "text and action, words and deeds,…what is enacted as well as what is intended" by the policy makers and comprises "a web of decisions that allocates values" to the policy implementers (Rizvi & Lingard, 2010, cited in Byram & Parmenter, 2012b, pp. 2-3). Policy in education is no exception. However, as indicated by Alderson (2017), and as will be further illustrated in this dissertation, "what is enacted" and "what is intended" are more often than not drifted into incongruence as the policy moves from its makers to its implementers.

When such occurrence ensues, it is perhaps, once again, not unfamiliar for practitioners in education to see the authorities—the policy makers—coercing, if not also blaming, the policy implementers. Specifically for education policy, teachers are potentially the individuals who are most picked on in such occasion, as they are

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considered the “front-liners” who transfer boardroom policy into classroom practice. It is often assumed that teachers possess not only the intellectual capacity to decipher complex policy texts but also the transformative power to make such policy take form—all by themselves. This assumption may be considered overly optimistic on teachers’ capability yet, at the same time, also excessively narrow-minded, as teachers who are not “successful” in implementing the policy are often seen as incompetent. However, current literature suggests that it is neither fair nor right to put such blame on teachers. Biesta, Priestley, and Robinson (2015), among many other researchers, have found that teachers are often ill-informed of the policy content and intention and are not provided with sufficient resources to enact the policy. More importantly, if not also consequently, education policy affects one very specific capacity of teachers—that is, teacher agency.

Agency is defined as the capacity of individuals “to exercise control over [their] own thought processes, motivation, and action” (Bandura, 1989, p. 1175) and “to shape [their] responsiveness to the situations [they] encounter in [their] lives” (Biesta & Tedder, 2007, p. 146). As will be demonstrated further in the subsequent sections of this dissertation, agency is an important quality in teachers—not the least because recent education policy calls for more agentic teachers but because achievement of agency is crucial to teachers’ professional development and, arguably, the quality of education they can provide. More awareness on the importance of teacher agency is raised by Gurney and Liyanage (2016)—once again, among many other researchers—who have found that “[t]eacher agency is critical in construction of knowledge about teaching and learning through workplace learning, and in navigation of [challenges in] professional development” (p. 52). Teacher agency is therefore the quality that will help teachers successfully act as agents of change—be it the change mandated in the education policy or, more importantly, the change needed for the betterment of students’ lives.

The current study is hence interested in investigating how teachers achieve their teacher agency in light of the education policy imposed on their work environment. In the process, the study also hopes to shed light on how content and intention in education policy are comprehended and put into practice. It has come to the researcher’s attention that research related to education policy and teacher agency

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in the context of English language education in Thailand is scarce. Moreover, participants of such research do not seem to reflect the reality of the English teacher population in Thailand because only Thai-nationality English teachers were included. It seems less commonly considered—if not completely forgotten—that the English language education of Thai students also rests upon non-Thai English teachers as well. In Thailand, there have long been a large number of teachers of diverse nationalities teaching English at various levels, from elementary to tertiary education. These teachers too are subject to the requirements of the Thai education policy, and their practices have an impact on the English language education of Thai students. Yet, not much research has been done to understand or include the voices of these non-Thai English teachers. The researcher thus sees this as a research gap and deems that it is worth studying these underexplored groups of teachers.

For this study, the researcher therefore includes English teachers from all of Braj Kachru's (1989) three concentric circles—namely, those from the Inner Circle-country background, those from the Outer Circle-country background, and those from the Expanding Circle-country background (more detail of the nationalities that comprise the participants of the study will be discussed in Chapter 3). It is hoped that the inclusion of English teachers from all three circles would augment the overall objective of the study, which aims at attaining a greater understanding of agency of English language teachers as it is exercised and achieved within the contingencies of the English language assessment policy in Thailand.

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In keeping with the research background discussed in the paragraphs above, the sections that follow will delineate further details of the research questions, the research objectives, the scope of the study, and the definition of key terms. This chapter will then conclude with an outline of this dissertation.

1.2 Research questions

The three research questions that this study addresses are as follows:

1. How do English teachers understand the English language assessment policy imposed on their institution, and what is their interpretation of such policy?

2. How do English teachers achieve agency in the classroom context, in light of the English language assessment policy?
3. How is agency of English teachers influenced by the English language assessment policy?

1.3 Research objectives

Reflecting the above-stated research questions, the objectives of the study are as follows:

1. To investigate how English teachers understand the English language assessment policy imposed on their institution and how they interpret such policy;
2. To investigate how English teachers achieve agency, given the contingencies of the classroom context and the imposed English language assessment policy; and,
3. To investigate how English language assessment policy influences agency of English teachers in Thailand.

1.4 Scope of the study

As mentioned in the background section, this study aims at attaining a greater understanding of teacher agency in the classroom context as it is exercised and achieved within the contingencies of an English language assessment policy. More specifically, the teachers whose agency is investigated are English language teachers teaching compulsory English courses in higher education institutions in Thailand. As for the policy, this study likewise focuses on the English language assessment policy enforced on higher education institutions in Thailand. Such policy is obtained from two documents. The first document constitutes sections in the National Education Plan B.E. 2560–2579 (2017–2036 C.E.) published by the Office of the Education Council (OEC), Ministry of Education, that stipulate the English language assessment policy for higher education level. The second document constitutes the clauses in the policy to upgrade English proficiency standards of higher education graduates, which

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was created and announced in 2016 by the Office of the Higher Education Commission (OHEC)[1], also under the Ministry of Education.

1.5 Definition of key terms

In this study, the following terms are used and defined as follows:

1. English language assessment policy

The English language assessment policy in this study refers to texts of two documents, as follows:

1. The sections of the National Education Plan B.E. 2560–2579 (2017–2036 C.E.) published by the OEC, Ministry of Education, which stipulate the English language assessment policy for higher education level. Namely, these sections set the English language proficiency requirement for higher education graduates; and,
2. The clauses in the policy to upgrade English proficiency standards of higher education graduates, created and announced in 2016 by the OHEC, Ministry of Education, which, among other requirements, stipulate that higher education institutions assess English proficiency of all students upon graduation.

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2. Agency, human agency, and teacher agency

In this study, the definition of agency has its basis on the definition of human agency, which is loosely defined by Bandura (1989) as “[t]he capacity to exercise control over one’s own thought processes, motivation, and action” (p. 1175) and similarly by Biesta and Tedder (2007) as the capacity of individuals “to shape [their] responsiveness to the situations [they] encounter in [their] lives” (p. 146). Teacher agency, according to Priestley, Biesta, and Robinson (2015), is “[human] agency theorized specifically in respect of the activities of teachers in schools” (p. 26). Therefore, in this study, teacher agency refers to the human capacity—in the

[1] Name and affiliation at the time of study—currently the Ministry of Higher Education, Science, Research and Innovation.

definitions of Bandura (1989) and Biesta and Tedder (2007)—of teachers operating in educational institutions.

It must also be noted that *agency* is the generic term for both *human agency* and *teacher agency* used in subsequent mentions of either one of these concepts within the same paragraph or section.

3. English teachers

English teachers in this study constitute individuals who teach the subject of English language to students in Thai higher education institutions. These teachers can be categorized into three groups according to Braj Kachru's (1989) three concentric circles and are further defined as follows:

1. English teachers from the Inner Circle background are teachers whose English is their first language and who were born, raised, and educated in the Inner Circle countries prior to commencing an English teaching career in Thailand;
2. English teachers from the Outer Circle background are teachers whose English is a second language and who were born, raised, and educated in the Outer Circle countries prior to commencing an English teaching career in Thailand; and,
3. English teachers from the Expanding Circle background are Thai teachers who studied English as a foreign language and who were born, raised, and educated in Thailand—although some of whom may have education experience overseas—prior to commencing an English teaching career in Thailand.

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4. Higher education

In this study, higher education is scoped to undergraduate or bachelor's degree-equivalent education level, although the technicality of the term does not preclude graduate—such as master's degree- and doctoral degree-equivalent—education levels. Additionally, the study concerns only higher education in the Thai program, which uses Thai language as the primary medium of instruction in non-language-related subjects.

1.6 Significance of the study

The researcher hopes that this study is of value in both theoretical and practical fronts, as follows:

1. Theoretical significance

Teacher agency in the context of English language education in Thailand will be better understood, as to what constitutes agency of English teachers, how such agency is influenced by the English language assessment policy, and how this subsequently influences the quality of English language education in Thailand. Thus, academic horizons on this topic will be expanded, in contribution to the field of English language education in Thailand as well as to the wider literature on English language teaching.

2. Practical significance

Better understanding of agency of English teachers from diverse backgrounds could aid in more effective policy planning and enactment, which will benefit stakeholders at various levels, from policy makers to policy administrators to policy implementers such as teachers. Namely,

1. seminars or training programs can be relevantly designed and provided to English teachers of different nationality and nativity in English, so as to equip them with the knowledge of the policy and at the same time provide them with the resources essential for professional practices that meet both the needs of the teachers and the intention of the policy makers; and,
2. teaching context can be made more conducive to the achievement of agency with respect to the particular background of English teachers, so as to bring about positive changes in English language education.

It is hoped that this multi-layered benefit would not only give rise to a practical and implementable policy but also lead to long-term improvement in the quality of English teachers as well as of English language education in Thailand.

1.7 Outline of the dissertation

This dissertation consists of five chapters. The current chapter, Chapter 1, introduces the background of the study, along with its research questions and research objectives. Key terms used in the study are defined and significance of the study—on both theoretical and practical fronts—discussed. An outline of the dissertation is given as a closing remark of the chapter, which is this very section, before the dissertation moves on to Chapter 2.

Chapter 2 reviews literature relevant to the study. There are five main parts, plus a chapter summary, to Chapter 2. The first part of the chapter reviews literature on education policy and English language assessment policy. The second part introduces the concept of human agency. A specific type of human agency—namely, teacher agency, which is what this study aims to investigate—is discussed in the third part of the chapter. The fourth part of the chapter captures the current theory and research on teacher agency, extrapolating the approaches used in analyzing and theorizing teacher agency together with key issues gleaned from recent studies. Then, in the fifth part, the literature review focuses more specifically on the interrelationship of the elements discussed in the previous parts of the chapter—a review of studies on teacher agency in relation to education policy. The chapter then closes with a chapter summary, and the dissertation moves on to Chapter 3.

Chapter 3 details the research methodology used in the study. The chapter starts with a depiction of the context of the study and then describes the participants, the research framework, and the research instruments. Data collection and data analysis processes are also presented before the chapter closes with, once again, a chapter summary. The dissertation then moves on to Chapter 4.

Chapter 4 presents key findings to the study. Results from analyses of both quantitative data and qualitative data are provided in the order of research questions. The chapter wraps up with a summary of key observations made by the researcher, and the dissertation moves on to Chapter 5.

Chapter 5, the final chapter of the dissertation, discusses critical issues emerged from the research findings and provides insights gleaned from such findings. The chapter also delineates implications and limitations of the study as well as offers recommendations for further research.

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A list of references and appendices—consisting of the excerpt of the policy documents in focus of this study, the questionnaire survey, the interview guide, and the results of the questionnaire survey—are also provided at the end of the dissertation.

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CHAPTER II
LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Education policy and English language assessment policy

2.1.1 Introduction on education policy

Education reforms and their accompanying policies are created for the betterment of the education system within their implementation scope. Authorities in charge of setting out such reforms and drafting such policies allegedly do so with good intentions. While there can be some exceptions, education policy texts are well documented with details on rationale and background that drive such reform, reform objectives, key performance indicators, implementation strategies, and even sample action plans, such as example curriculum or course syllabus. However, the reality is far from ideal, and realizing such policy texts is not an easy feat. Enacting a policy may need only a single letter of announcement, but implementing a policy requires communications to various stakeholders at various levels—for example, parents at the community level, principals at the school level, and teachers at the classroom level. Layers of stakeholders entail layers of communications, upon which policy details are lost or not at all communicated (Byram & Parmenter, 2012b). To further complicate the matter, there is no guarantee that stakeholders at the receiving end of the policy—whether those who need to pass it down further to the next level of stakeholders, such as school principals, or those who need to implement the policy texts in their practice, such as classroom teachers—would fully understand what the policy is about. Both inaccurate understanding of correct information and accurate understanding of incorrect information could render policy implementation a waste of effort alike.

Furthermore, there is a matter of policy texts being unrealistic upon implementation. This is likely due to the fact that policy makers are not necessarily policy implementers. Policy can fall short of being implemented, and may at times be outright contested, because the implementers perceive that it cannot be done or that doing so would mean going against their personal beliefs or values (Biesta et al., 2015; Van Huy, Hamid, & Renshaw, 2016). So, even though education policy attempts to bring about new ways of doing things, the old ways of education remain—

a condition dubbed "innovation without change" by Priestley, Edwards, Priestley, and Miller (2012).

While education policy generally covers a vast number of subject areas, with the scope of this study, a particular attention is paid on policy related to English language education, especially in the aspect of English language assessment. The subsequent sections of this chapter will then present a review of documents and literature on relevant English language policy and English language assessment policy, as well as prominent issues that emerge as a consequence.

2.1.2 English language assessment policy in education policy

2.1.2.1 The Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR)

The Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) has been cited as one of the most influential language frameworks since its official publication in 2001. Even though the CEFR was originally developed for use in countries within Europe (Council of Europe, 2001), its influence has permeated to continents beyond (Alderson, 2017; Byram & Parmenter, 2012b; Figueras, 2012; He & Chen, 2017; Jin, Wu, Alderson, & Song, 2017; Sawaki, 2017; Trim, 2012; Zhao, Wang, Coniam, & Xie, 2017; Zou & Zhang, 2017)—so much so that Byram and Parmenter (2012b) referred to the spread of the CEFR as an example of "the globalisation of education policy" (p. 1).

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Evidence of such influence can be found in various literature, one of which is *The Common European Framework of Reference: The Globalisation of Language Education Policy* which compiled cases of the CEFR impacting local language policy in countries worldwide (Byram & Parmenter, 2012a). Reflecting on such cases from countries within Europe as well as those from the Americas—including the United States where English is primarily a first language—and Asia-Pacific, Alison Phipps, series editor of the above-mentioned book, noted how within a decade of the CEFR's official publication, the impact of this language framework had reached a "global level" (Byram & Parmenter, 2012a, p. ix). Indeed, as early as 2004, Glenn Fulcher made a comment that the CEFR was "rapidly becoming 'the' system" of institutionalized language framework (Fulcher, 2004), and, since then, it seems that the number of countries whose local language policy is impacted by the CEFR has been on the rise. Figueras (2012) attributed the widespread “success” of the CEFR to two factors, as follows:

The first factor relates to the fact that “[g]overnments and applied linguists wanted to link language learning, language teaching, and language assessment to a more real-life oriented approach and were striving to find a common currency, in terms of terminology and in terms of levels of attainment,” and the CEFR’s “operational definition of language” and “action-oriented approach” which “requires that curriculum, pedagogy, and assessment are not only related but interdependent” fulfilled such needs (Figueras, 2012, pp. 478, 481).

The second factor contributing to the CEFR’s success is, as Figueras (2012) put it, “the positive wording of the level descriptors, and its non-compulsory nature with a structure open to multimodality and adaptations” (p. 479). This is in fact an intention of the CEFR. According to Brian North, one of the CEFR’s co-authors, the CEFR descriptors are versatile, such that they “can be used for setting objectives, for self-assessment, for teacher assessment and for relating assessment results to common reference points” and that “the [Council of Europe] has recently published a manual to help examination providers relate their tests to the [CEFR]” (North, 2004). Another co-author of the CEFR, John Trim, also noted the intent of the framework developers clearly that they

> did not wish to impose a top-down system…but rather to empower teachers and learners to plan courses as close to the point of learning as possible, in light of the needs, motivations, characteristics and resources of the particular learners involved in their local situation (Trim, 2012, p. 25)

and that the framework as a whole

> should be flexible, open, dynamic and non-dogmatic, since the aim was not to prescribe how languages should be learnt, taught and assessed, but to raise awareness, stimulate reflection and improve communication among practitioners…and [the framework] was expected to evolve further as knowledge and experiences expanded. (Trim, 2012, pp. 29-30)

With “a structure open to multimodality and adaptations” (Figueras, 2012, p. 479) and level descriptors purportedly flexible for various purposes of language learning, teaching, and assessment, the CEFR has spurred many initiatives in the language

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profession, leading to research projects, professional networks—one of which was the formation of the European Association for Language Testing and Assessment (EALTA)—and teacher training that, as reported by Figueras (2012), "resulted in considerable professional growth" in Europe (p. 481).

With this seemingly-evident advantage of the CEFR, initiatives in other parts of the world—Asia included—began to emerge, using the CEFR as a basis or as reference for local development. In Japan, the CEFR level labels (henceforth "the CEFR levels") and level descriptors (henceforth "the CEFR descriptors") underwent local adaptation, which included adjustment, addition, and validation so that the framework would be more suitable for use in the Japanese context. After several years of research and development efforts, the locally-adapted version, the CEFR-J, was released in 2012 (Alderson, 2017; He & Chen, 2017; Jin et al., 2017; Negishi & Tono, 2014; Zou & Zhang, 2017).

A more recent project involving the use of the CEFR in Japan was reported by Sawaki (2017), where the CEFR—as opposed to the CEFR-J—was used to classify English language ability levels of upper secondary school students nationwide. The results were then used by Japan's Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science, and Technology to set improvement plans for the nations' English language instruction and examination system (Sawaki, 2017).

In the same vein, the CEFR was taken up in Taiwan as a "common standard of English proficiency" (Jin et al., 2017, p. 9) with which the national English proficiency test—called the General English Proficiency Test (GEPT)—was aligned, although not without some challenges with regard to the sufficiency of the CEFR descriptors in serving such an alignment task (Jin et al., 2017; Zhao et al., 2017; Zou & Zhang, 2017).

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Yet, possibly one of the most ambitious endeavors inspired by the CEFR is China's effort to establish "a national framework of reference for English language education" (Jin et al., 2017, p. 1). In spite of an initial setback due to a shift in project patronage, the development of China Standards of English (CSE) commenced in 2014. Such development effort involved a considerable number of researchers and experts in English language profession from China and overseas and took into consideration such "receiving-end" stakeholders as teachers, learners, parents, and other potential users of this national framework (Alderson, 2017; Jin et al., 2017; National Educational Examination Authority (Ministry of Education of P. R. China), 2014; O'Sullivan, Wu, Liu, & Dunlea, 2019). The CSE was launched in 2018 and has since been mapped with such standardized English tests as the British Council's Aptis test system, the IELTS test, and the TOEFL test (IELTS, 2019; Nott, 2019; Wang, 2019; Xinhua, 2019). In developing the CSE, the CEFR was used both as a reference—e.g., as a case study from which the CSE team analyzed and learned so as to obtain best practices and avoid possible pitfalls—and as a resource—e.g., as a complement to local development, such as an incorporation of communicative-oriented descriptors of the CEFR into the academic-oriented descriptors of the local Test for English Majors (TEM) so as to enhance the comprehensiveness of TEM's writing scale descriptors (Zou & Zhang, 2017). As remarked by He and Chen (2017), two of the experts responsible for developing the listening ability scales for the CSE, "[t]he CEFR's non-prescriptive scheme and illustrative descriptors make it flexible and internationally applicable" (p. 4), and even though not all content in the CEFR can be straightforwardly applied to China's vast and varied contexts, the framework still "serves as a good example in the development of CSE" (He & Chen, 2017, pp. 1, 2).

Despite the success stories of the CEFR in Europe and elsewhere on the globe, the framework is not without its critics. One among them, Glenn Fulcher, published a comment on the CEFR in the March 18, 2004, issue of *The Guardian*, stating not only that "a common frame of reference that describes 'levels of proficiency' across languages and tests is not new" but also that among the many language frameworks that had been developed—the CEFR included—"with one or two exceptions, none of them has any theoretical or empirical underpinning" (Fulcher, 2004). Commenting that the CEFR was developed mainly from statistical analysis of teachers' evaluation of compiled proficiency descriptors, Fulcher (2004) argued that the CEFR was "nothing more than a set of scaled descriptors that reflects what groups of teachers drawn from around Europe could agree represented 'more' and 'less' proficient" (Fulcher, 2004).

What Fulcher (2004) saw as a critical issue was that, in addition to the fact that the CEFR descriptors were not developed based on any theoretical or empirical basis,

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the use—or, more aptly, misuse—of the CEFR descriptors had quickly spread. For instance, teachers perceived that the CEFR levels “represent an acquisitional hierarchy” and that the descriptors exemplify “the sequence of how and what learners learn” (Fulcher, 2004). This is problematic because, as Brian North explained in the April 15, 2004, issue of *The Guardian*—presumably in response to Fulcher’s March 18, 2004, article—the six levels of the CEFR “are not the product of acquisitional hierarchies from second language acquisition (SLA) research,” although this, he claimed, was because second language acquisition research had yet to produce a complete model of acquisitional hierarchy (North, 2004).

Another area where Fulcher (2004) found serious misuse of the CEFR descriptors was in language testing. Language test developers made great attempts to demonstrate how scores from their tests can be interpreted according to the CEFR levels, as score users deemed that language test scores not reported in accordance with the CEFR levels were not valid and would thus not recognize such scores (Fulcher, 2004). This not only raised the danger of invalid linkage between language test scores and the CEFR levels but also led to an even more problematic practice of comparing scores across inequivalent tests purported to be linked to a common framework.

Another critique on the CEFR was given by Neus Figueras. Figueras (2012) observed how widely used and recognized the CEFR levels and descriptors were in Europe within merely ten years after the framework’s publication. Publishers of language teaching and learning materials as well as language testing institutions started to incorporate the CEFR levels, and even the European stars, into their products (Figueras, 2012). Professional conferences related to language teaching and assessment became rife with discussion on the CEFR (Figueras, 2012). Yet, Figueras (2012) found that, up to the time of her writing, there were “no published studies on the changes made in the tests and the effects on validity or enhanced relevance” of CEFR-labeled materials, and that language textbooks still contained “tables of contents that are still the same as ten years ago, organized by topics or by language functions” (p. 481). This therefore presents a clear evidence of a “mismatch between reported influences and published accounts” of the CEFR (Figueras, 2012, p. 481).

Similar to what Fulcher (2004) mentioned eight years prior, Figueras (2012) also made two major criticisms of the CEFR. The first criticism has to do with the

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"relevance and validity" of the CEFR descriptors in relation to theories of second language acquisition (Figueras, 2012, pp. 482-483) and with regard to the clarity of language used in the descriptors—for instance, in Figueras's word, "the CEFR did not specify what was meant by 'long' or 'short' or 'familiar'" and "does 'read' mean the same as 'understand'?" (Figueras, 2012, p. 483). Another criticism is also akin to that of Fulcher's (2004)—that is, misuse of the CEFR, although on a different aspect of use. Figueras (2012) pointed out that "[a] number of uses to which the CEFR has been put were never called for by the authors or by the Council of Europe" (p. 483). One example of such misuse is the fact that the CEFR has been applied to all levels of education and to various "types" of language, such as language for specific purposes and first language, when the goal of the CEFR was in fact to "aid foreign language learning in the adult context in Europe" (Figueras, 2012, p. 483; Jin et al., 2017; Trim, 2012). Uses—or, rather, misuses—of the CEFR beyond its original intention and scope were therefore deemed inadequate, if not downright inappropriate.

Despite the above critique that Figueras (2012) summed up as "the animosity that the CEFR has generated in Europe and beyond" (p. 484), it can be seen that the CEFR proves a useful framework when used or applied appropriately—that is, with consideration and intention of the CEFR's creators in mind. The benefits derived from the CEFR can be seen from the "common language" that the framework provides as a starting point for intellectual discussions, professional initiatives, and further development in the area of language learning, teaching, and assessment at the local level (Zou & Zhang, 2017). The following section will then turn to a local language policy that has undoubtedly received some influence from the CEFR—a discussion on English language assessment policy in Thai education system.

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2.1.2.2 English language assessment policy in Thai education system

The Ministry of Education of Thailand is the authority that stipulates the overarching education policy for the country. This national education policy—currently in effect is the National Education Plan B.E. 2560–2579 (2017–2036 C.E.) published by the

Office of the Education Council (OEC), Ministry of Education[2]—is a 20-year plan that encompasses the vision, mission, goals and objectives, strategies, as well as key performance indicators intended for all stakeholders in the Thai education system. Based on such stipulation, the policy also provides a "responsibility checklist" for relevant departments of the Ministry of Education to be passed down to their respective sub-divisions. Informed by the national education policy, these sub-divisions then develop a shorter-range framework or action plan to implement the policy. However, it must be noted that, the national education policy is a long-term plan (e.g., 20 years), while the sub-division framework or action plan tends to be shorter-term (e.g., 15 years or shorter). Therefore, an overlap can be seen in the effectiveness period between the national education policy and the sub-division plan—for instance, the current higher education framework[3] is a 15-year plan with the effectiveness period of B.E. 2551–2565 (2008–2022 C.E.) (Office of the Higher Education Commission, 2008).

In respect of language education, the National Education Plan also designates key performance indicators on English proficiency level desired of Thai graduates of junior secondary education (*matthayom ton*), senior secondary education (*matthayom plai*), and higher education (bachelor's degree equivalent). Even though the National Education Plan does not explicitly name this designation an English language assessment policy, it is ostensibly one, as it stipulates that the aforementioned students' English proficiency be measured against the six proficiency levels of the CEFR: A1, A2, B1, B2, C1, and C2 (Office of the Education Council, 2017, pp. 84, 155, 163). The requirement that the English proficiency of graduating students be assessed and evaluated against the policy's indicators arguably makes this stipulation the country's *de facto* English language assessment policy.

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Still, regardless of whether or not the National Education Plan could or should as well be considered an English language assessment policy, this national policy undoubtedly attempts to exert influence on the country's English language learning, teaching, and assessment. While it can be said that education policy—one currently in

[2] Original title: แผนการศึกษาแห่งชาติ พ.ศ. 2560–2579 จัดทำโดย สำนักงานเลขาธิการสภาการศึกษา กระทรวงศึกษาธิการ

[3] Original title: กรอบแผนอุดมศึกษาระยะยาว 15 ปี ฉบับที่ 2 (พ.ศ. 2551–2565)

effect or otherwise—almost always involves top-down influences, much is yet to be discovered as to what in fact happens at the "ground level" where such influences are meant to take place. This is especially true in Thailand, where research on English language policy—and, in particular, English language assessment policy—is scarce (Fitzpatrick, 2011). Moreover, of the few studies on this topic that have been conducted in Thailand, most, if not all, found that there are discrepancies between the rhetoric of the English language assessment policy and the reality of English classroom practice (Fitzpatrick, 2011). These studies, gathered and reviewed by Fitzpatrick (2011), contend that the problem lies with individuals who are policy implementers, most notably English language teachers (henceforth "English teachers"), and this sentiment is observed in a wide range of research contexts—from a small-scale study conducted in a Thai metropolitan school, to a couple of large-scale studies, each involving over 100 teachers, in public schools in northern and southern Thailand, to a few other studies conducted in higher education institutions. It appears from these studies that teachers were chiefly blamed for not understanding the policy or not interpreting it correctly because the researchers found that the teachers' classroom practices were not in line with the pedagogical approach prescribed by the policy (Prapaisit de Segovia & Hardison, 2008, cited in Fitzpatrick, 2011). Another researcher alluded to a problem in which teachers were firmly rooted to a teaching methodology through which they were taught as students and hence brought with them such an outdated methodology to contemporary English classrooms (Kwangsawad, 2007, cited in Fitzpatrick, 2011).

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Thus, the recommendation made by such studies gears toward providing more teacher training, so as to improve teachers' understanding of—and align their pedagogical practices with—the policy texts (Fitzpatrick, 2011). This, however, seems an unfair suggestion. As with any form of communication, successful transmission of an intended message depends not only on the receiver of such message but also on the sender of the message as well as on the message itself (Ashman, 2019; Corey, 2019). To place all the blame on teachers—the receiver of the message—seems ill-considered. Indeed, it is noteworthy that some of the above-mentioned studies probed the teachers as to why their practices were not in alignment with the policy, and findings showed that it was probable that the message, and to a certain extent the sender of the message also, was the real culprit.

For instance, teachers in the study of Prapaisit de Segovia and Hardison (2008) asserted that the pedagogical approach of the policy neither fit their teaching contexts nor responded to their students' needs (Fitzpatrick, 2011). Other teachers from the study of Kwangsawad (2007) expressed concerns on their own "low levels of English" and consequently the "time and language demands" of the pedagogical approach prescribed by the policy, which require them to employ a communicative orientation toward teaching English (Fitzpatrick, 2011, pp. 58-59). Yet other teachers from Thamraksa's (2003) study were cited as being "perplexed" by the freedom and autonomy given to them by the policy (p. 59, cited in Fitzpatrick, 2011, p. 60)—for instance, teachers were allowed to develop their own materials as long as such materials were appropriate with respect to the policy objectives. This bewilderment came about not because the teachers were incapable but because there was not enough guideline in the policy to inform them as to what constitute appropriate materials.

Findings from cases in the studies above, which most likely represent only a minute part of the reality in English language education in Thailand, illustrate that, indeed, the message—the policy texts—as well as the sender of the message—the policy makers—also contribute to the problem of gaps between policy and practice. English language policy, and likewise English language assessment policy, was conceivably drafted by policy makers who arguably do not fully understand the English teaching and learning contexts in Thailand, which are varied and complex. Hence, the product was a one-size-fits-all policy that was pressed into implementation with little, if any, consideration of the readiness of the message receivers—policy implementers who need to turn the policy texts into action. To better understand this persisting problem, it is imperative to delve further into issues of enactment and implementation of English language assessment policy, the detail of which will be discussed in the following section.

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2.1.3 Issues in enactment and implementation of English language assessment policy

2.1.3.1 Top-down issues: Policy borrowing and policy dumping

In the introduction to *The Common European Framework of Reference: The Globalisation of Language Education Policy*, Byram and Parmenter (2012b) discussed the effects that globalization has on education policy. As with facilitation of trade, information, and technology, facilitation of "the movement of [education] policy" is also made possible by globalization (Byram & Parmenter, 2012b, p. 6). Citing Dale (2007), Byram and Parmenter mentioned that there are several "mechanisms of external effects on national [local] policies," one of which is "policy borrowing"—a process which involves "one country borrowing, imitating or copying from another" at the level of states or education systems (Byram & Parmenter, 2012b, pp. 1, 6).

As the process of globalization accelerates, so too the speed—as well as the amount and the extent—of transfer of trade, information, technology, and, undeniably, education policy. More recently, the mechanism of "policy dumping"—as opposed to simply "borrowing"—has been documented. Policy dumping, as its name suggests, refers to a practice in which policy from one country's system is put directly into use in another country's system with minimal—or at times without—consideration of local context and status quo, which potentially leads to problems due to the abruptness of policy enactment (Johnstone, 2010; Hu & McKay, 2012, cited in Van Huy et al., 2016). Unfortunately, policy dumping—along with implementation problems associated with such action—is becoming widespread in various parts of the globe. Specifically in the field of language education, this phenomenon has occurred to a considerable extent with the inception of the CEFR, which has taken up a major role in the "globalisation of education policy in the last three decades" (Byram & Parmenter, 2012b, p. 2).

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An instance of policy dumping problem is illustrated in Van Huy et al. (2016). The researchers conducted a study within the context of Vietnam's National Foreign Language Project 2020, part of which involved the use of the CEFR levels to measure the English proficiency of university students upon degree completion (C1 for language majors and B1 for non-language majors) and of English language instructors at university level (minimum C1). The adoption of such measures caught both teachers and students unaware and unprepared for the new requirement (Van Huy et al., 2016). Exacerbating the problem was the fact that the measures were so hurriedly enacted that necessary accommodations—such as training programs, curricula and courses, and learning facilities—had not yet been in place to help teachers and students understand and work toward such extreme requirement in such little time. When these stakeholders at the receiving end of the policy lacked understanding and resources, the result was, not surprisingly, absence of cooperation and positive outcome (Van Huy et al., 2016). Yet, not meeting the policy requirement would cause a permanent negative impact on university graduates. Therefore, as opposed to developing teaching methodology to raise students' English proficiency level, teachers instead invented "coping strategies" such as providing test prep papers or tweaking exam items to help students attain the CEFR level required for graduation (Van Huy et al., 2016, p. 78).

As noted in the statement by John Trim above, while the developers of the CEFR may claim that the intention of creating and implementing such a framework was not to manifest a policy, the CEFR is arguably a policy document (Trim, 2012). Byram and Parmenter (2012b) pointed out that "[t]he CEFR embodies values, and this is what characterizes policy as intention, text and action" and argued that "the value base of the CEFR is evident" through what the framework wishes to promote (p. 3). Indeed, this "value base of the CEFR" is clearly stated in the opening pages of the framework's publication, and it ranges from specific learner-related aspects such as the development of "learner's whole personality and sense of identity" and "communicative proficiency [which] involves other dimensions…(e.g., sociocultural awareness, imaginative experience, affective relations, learning to learn, etc.)" to broader intercommunity-related aspects such as the facilitation of "greater mobility, more effective international communication combined with respects for identity and cultural diversity,…improved working relations and a deeper mutual understanding" among people in member nations (Council of Europe, 2001, pp. 1, 5, 7). Therefore, in Byram and Parmenter's view, "[t]he CEFR is clearly a policy document bearing values and intentions" (Byram & Parmenter, 2012b, p. 4).

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What the above argument implies is that implementing a policy developed under a certain value system in another environment with a distinct value system—whether in a form of policy borrowing or, more severely, policy dumping—is not always ideal. In fact, Jin et al. (2017) expressed such concern not only with applying a European-based framework such as the CEFR to a Chinese-based context in the development of the CSE but also with applying one standardized framework such as the CSE to a country as vast and as diverse as China. Thus, with the increasing speed at which education policy proliferates via globalization, bringing with it a "foreign" value system, and the increasing tendency for such policy to be dumped straight into the local context, it is worth following Zou and Zhang's (2017) advice for the necessity to modify and adapt the borrowed policy—whether the CEFR or otherwise—before implementing it locally, and bearing in mind Fulcher's (2010) caution, echoed in Jin et al. (2017), against the "indiscriminate" use of the CEFR in non-European contexts (Jin et al., 2017, p. 17; Zou & Zhang, 2017).

2.1.3.2 Bottom-up issues: Understanding, interpreting, and implementing the policy

Alison Phipps, the series editor of *The Common European Framework of Reference: The Globalisation of Language Education Policy*, noted that the cases compiled in the book exemplified "the pitfalls and problems which policy and its interpretation encounters in a global context and the extent to which the [CEFR] is re-made, culturally, and in policy terms, in each different teaching and learning context" (Byram & Parmenter, 2012a, p. x). Even though Phipps's account refers specifically to the implementation of the CEFR in various countries around the globe, the "pitfalls and problems" of policy enactment that her account exemplifies are by no means exclusive to the CEFR. In literature relating to education policy, stories of such problematic policy enactment issues abound (Alderson, 2017; Byram & Parmenter, 2012a; Figueras, 2012; Jin et al., 2017; Priestley et al., 2015; Priestley et al., 2012; Trim, 2012; Van Huy et al., 2016). A major contributing factor to such issues is the lack of understanding of how policy implementers—such as school administrators and teachers—receive, interpret, and enact the policy. Van Huy et al. (2016) stressed the importance of studying how "actors [policy implementers] engage in the policy enactment process" (p. 69) because available research seems outdated and little has

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been done more recently. Understanding such process is crucial because it is through this process that these implementers interpret policy texts and transform them into action, hence contributing to the extent that policy implementation is considered successful (Van Huy et al., 2016).

Reverting to the scope of policy in language education, and specifically to the CEFR, it is found that the CEFR has been much, if not most, contested with regard to interpretation of its levels, its descriptors, and even its framework texts. For instance, with regard to the understanding and interpretation of the CEFR levels—A1, A2, B1, B2, C1, and C2—an observation was made by Figueras (2012) that "[t]he use of the CEFR level labels…is very visible and has become commonplace in all educational levels in Europe…[so much so that]…terms like 'beginner' or 'intermediate'…have been replaced by the use of A1 or B1…" (Figueras, 2012, p. 479). However, Figueras continued, as "[i]t is not always the case that A1 is more transparent than 'beginner,' especially if the label is used in isolation without its corresponding descriptor or if the descriptor is not clearly operationalized into outcomes," these CEFR levels are used "with very little awareness of what they mean" (Figueras, 2012, p. 479). It is thought-provoking, and at the same time worrisome, that such little understanding was observed among language practitioners in Europe—the people for whom the CEFR was intended—even over a decade after the CEFR was introduced to them.

The matter of understanding and interpreting proficiency levels cannot be taken lightly. Alderson (2017) brought up this issue on the very first page of his "Foreword to the special issue 'The Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) for English Language Assessment in China' of *Language Testing in Asia*" that

> [i]n second and foreign language education, there is a long tradition of stating expected levels of achievement…However, such stated levels were often vague and were not defined independently of higher or lower levels…the meanings of which were interpreted very differently in different contexts, cultures and educational systems, such that one person's or system's "False Beginner" might be another's "Intermediate". (p. 1)

Then, before closing off his foreword remark, Alderson (2017) once again posed an important question on the matter of proficiency level for all language practitioners to

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consider: “[W]hat does it mean to be ‘at’ a level, and how is a ‘level’ to be defined?” (p. 8). This sentiment is reaffirmed in Jin et al. (2017), reflecting on the development of the CSE, that “it is difficult to determine the number of levels needed for a language proficiency measure and to measure the distance between the levels” and that “[t]he levels of a language proficiency measure are in fact arbitrary” (p. 7). Nonetheless, Alderson (2017) did note that the establishment of the CEFR levels—and the attempt to clearly define each level with descriptors that state “what learners at particular levels could do with the particular language being assessed”—was one effort by the Council of Europe to counter this problem (p. 1).

Yet, it seems that the CEFR levels and descriptors do not prove to be a silver bullet. As mentioned in the critique by Figueras (2012) in the above section, the language used in the CEFR is criticized for being unclear and hence subject to varied interpretation. Hence, problems in understanding and interpreting the CEFR levels and descriptors still persist, which is precisely what Zhao et al. (2017) encountered in their study. The authors were responsible for calibrating the CSE’s college English vocabulary descriptors against the CEFR as part of an external validation process of the CSE vocabulary descriptors. The study involved 22 university-level English teachers in Mainland China who were given, and briefed on, both the general descriptive scales and the vocabulary scales of the CEFR. The teachers were then asked to scale a collection of 39 vocabulary descriptors, the judgment from which would be used to improve the CSE vocabulary scales and descriptors.

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Data analysis showed that disagreement among participating teachers were substantial, with 17 out of 39 descriptors having problems of level “misfitting” or “overfitting” (Zhao et al., 2017, p. 13). Some descriptors showed disagreement of judgment over a range of three levels. For example, one particular descriptor was rated by different teachers as B1+, B2, and C1. The authors attributed such variation in judgment mainly to the unclarity of language in the CEFR texts—the fact that “[m]any terms in the CEFR are undefined, and there are problems with the wording of some descriptors” (Zhao et al., 2017, pp. 3-4), such that it was suspected the teachers had “difficulty distinguishing such terms as ‘a wide range of’, ‘a large number of’ and ‘a range of’” used in the descriptors (Zhao et al., 2017, p. 13). The prevalence of vague language use in the CEFR descriptors, coupled with the fact that the teachers may not have been fully accustomed to the framework, led to such inconsistency in interpretation and judgment on the sample descriptors in this study. The authors thus made a closing remark, citing Kaftandjieva (2004), cautioning future researchers that, while "the CEFR scales are valid…this does not guarantee that the scales will be validly interpreted as standards in all contexts in which they may be used" (Zhao et al., 2017, p. 15).

In addition to the risk of misinterpretation and confusion among implementers, the subject of the inadequacy of the CEFR, especially of its descriptors, is also widely discussed. Jin et al. (2017) stated that the CEFR descriptors are not "informative" enough with respect to "what learners should have learnt in order to perform the tasks specified at a particular level" and that "[c]an-do descriptors describe performances typical of a proficiency level, which are observable, measurable and describable, rather than underlying competences, which are not directly observable and therefore difficult to measure and describe" (Jin et al., 2017, p. 15). Similarly, and perhaps more bluntly, Trim (2012) commented that "the level descriptors provided in CEFR were inadequate" (p. 32). The author made a case especially relevant to those in the area of language assessment that the CEFR descriptors were

> [d]esigned to meet the criteria of positiveness, definiteness, clarity, brevity and independence, [hence] their user-friendliness made an immediate appeal to learners, teachers, parents, employers, educational authorities and other users, but, perhaps for that very reason, they [the descriptors] could not meet the criterion of operational adequacy for those charged with the actual construction and conduct of tests and examinations leading to recognised qualifications in specific language. (p. 32)

Such inadequacy, therefore, makes it difficult for implementers, especially teachers, to transfer framework texts into action (Byram & Parmenter, 2012b), and this prospect is also anticipated by Jin et al. (2017) in implementing the CSE, in that the national framework could "meet considerable individual resistance" because "[p]ractitioners of English language education…may find it difficult to understand and apply the proficiency levels and illustrative descriptors in their routine practices" (p. 15).

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Another important issue contributing to adequacy of a language framework's descriptors relate to what gets included and what does not. As Jin et al. (2017) pointed out, constructing a framework requires a "selection of so-called typical tasks to be described in illustrative scales," and it is "difficult to reach consensuses on the typical communicative tasks of a particular proficiency level" because a particular framework "can only include a limited number of typical communicative tasks" (p. 15). Such limitation is understandable and even necessary, as further explained by Jin et al. (2017), because to maintain practicality, "it is not possible for the framework to be sufficiently comprehensive to cover all the tasks that are being used or hoped to be used in classroom teaching and assessment," especially when classroom contexts vary considerably across the country (p. 15). This, however, leads to yet another related risk. The implementers of the framework may focus only on language areas or tasks that are included in the descriptors, mistakenly believing that such inclusion signifies importance rather than typicality and erroneously—although, in a sense, not intentionally—"ignore other less typical but nonetheless important ones" (Jin et al., 2017, p. 15).

It is one thing when the creators select what is to be included in a framework or policy, but it is completely a different matter when the implementers select what inside the framework or policy to follow through. This latter circumstance is documented by Byram and Parmenter (2012b) that "the intentions of [the CEFR's] authors may not be read by its users, and the text may not be taken in entirety but only used in part for the purposes of the users" (p. 4). While this problem is not exclusive to the CEFR, it exemplifies another type of hindrance to policy implementation—that is, selective enactment of particular policy aspects that would be of advantage to the implementers. This selective action is especially prevalent when what is stipulated in the policy is considered difficult, problematic, or simply not in alignment with personal beliefs or agenda of the implementers (Jin et al., 2017; Priestley et al., 2012). Furthermore, this "personal politics"—a term used by Alderson (2009) and quoted in Jin et al. (2017, p. 2)—is at times difficult to detect because implementers, whether those at the individual level or those at the institutional level, may "pay lip service to [the policy] by claiming a link between the curricula or assessment and [the policy] in order to be considered politically correct" when only minimal or superficial action is

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in fact taken (Jin et al., 2017, pp. 13-14), undoubtedly to the detriment of policy implementation intended by the policy makers.

It can be seen from this section that issues in enactment and implementation of English language assessment policy stem from various reasons and manifest themselves at various levels, ranging from the level of those who stipulate the policy to the level of those who need to put the policy into practice. It is evident as well that, at the level of policy implementers, whether the policy is fully embraced, selectively enacted, superficially endorsed, or overtly ejected, such outcome lies with matters of external imposition as well as with matters of internal, personal disposition. It is into this internal, personal disposition that Alison Phipps encouraged more research in order to understand how a language policy, or a language assessment policy, impacts the different angles—e.g., learning, teaching, and assessment—and the different individuals—e.g., students, teachers, and administrators—within the language education system in which the policy is implemented (Byram & Parmenter, 2012a, p. x). The remaining sections of this chapter will then move on to an investigation of the individuals, and subsequently specifically on teachers, with regard to a particular persona that is closely tied to policy implementation—human agency.

2.2 Human agency

Human agency is a concept that has been extensively researched—and debated—in the field of sociology. Sociologists have long tried to uncover the origin of human agency—loosely defined by one prominent figure in sociology as "[t]he capacity to exercise control over one's own thought processes, motivation, and action" (Bandura, 1989, p. 1175)—and sought to explain its nature in relation to social structures. In doing so, sociologists acknowledge that, at the macro level, the society exhibits particular norms and values, which vary from society to society and are mutable over time. According to Kidd (2002), these cultural norms—defined as "the culturally prescribed ways or patterns of behaviour that a society expects of its 'normal' members" (p. 17)—and values—defined as "the ends that 'normal' behavioural patterns attempt to achieve" (p. 17)—shape how members of the society behave and at the same time act as a foundation for each member's sense of identity. Yet, issues regarding sense of identity—how individuals "think about [themselves] as people,

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how [they] think about other people around [them], and what [they] think others think of [them]" (Kidd, 2002, p. 7)—inform sociologists that variation also exists at the micro level.

As a result, two major schools of thought have emerged: One believes that individuals are passively influenced by the society of which they are members, hence they are merely the "product of social structures" (Luhman & Cunliffe, 2013, p. 163) or "cultural robots" (Kidd, 2002, p. 17), while the other believes that individuals freely and actively create their own "reality [in the society] in which they live" (Kidd, 2002, p. 18). That is, sociologists within this latter perspective consider individuals—also called "actors" or "agents"—to be "endowed with 'agency'" (Kidd, 2002, p. 18). Still, the concept of human agency remains vague, and disagreement abounds. Nonetheless, even though the debate among sociological intellectuals is by no means settled, the following sections will attempt to tap into key discussion on this yet-inconclusive concept of human agency.

2.2.1 What is human agency?

Kidd (2002) stated that "a dominant theme running throughout sociological thought is the relationship of the individual to society" (p. 74). Over the years, this theme has led to coinage of various notions, which are defined and used to describe qualities or characteristics of individuals. An example of one established notion is "identity," which is defined as "the unique set of characteristics associated with a particular individual relative to the perceptions and characteristics of others," and such perceptions "derive from differences among humans which have social value and meaning within human culture" which include both personal attributes, such as physical appearance or skills and competencies, as well as social attributes, such as professional affiliation or socio-economic status (Pennington, 2015; Pennington & Richards, 2016, p. 6). Identity is also said to be a "reflection" of a person's environment and what that person does in such environment, which gives rise to the notion of multiple identities (Benson, 2017; Pennington & Richards, 2016). For instance, one particular individual can take on three different identities in three different settings—a mother at home, a business associate at work, and a volunteer at a local charity. Moreover, identity is related to a person's "self-image" and "self-awareness" formed through cultural values and beliefs; therefore, identity is also a person's projection of what is considered "appropriate" within a particular environment (Pennington & Richards, 2016, p. 7).

Another well-recognized notion in this individual-and-society theme is "autonomy," which, according to Benson (2017), is "the capacity of individuals to exercise control over their lives" (p. 18). However, Benson (2017) added, such control is not so much intended for immediate results but is more targeted toward reaching a desired future outcome. One example given by Benson (2017) is autonomy in learning—that "autonomy [in learning] is more than being able to control one's learning; it also involves directing learning towards long-term identity goals…we learn 'something' because we want to become 'somebody'" in the society of which such individuals are a part (Benson, 2017, pp. 19-20).

For Kidd (2002), however, there is yet another important notion founded on this individual-and-society theme that has received much consideration from various sociological intellectuals—that is, the notion of "free will" or "the freedom [that] individuals may or may not have to create culture and shape their own identities" (p. 74). This notion has captured intellectual attention because it is closely associated with the concept of human agency (henceforth "agency"), in that having agency means "[having] freedom to act, or having free will" (Kidd, 2002, p. 74). However, free will is not all there is to agency. On the same token, agency is not a confluence of multiple identities, which for the most part derives from social values, nor is it the same as autonomy, which mainly concerns efforts gearing toward the future. Sociologist Anthony Giddens explained in his book, *The Constitution of Society*, that

> [a]gency refers not to the intentions people have in doing things but to their capability of doing those things in the first place…Whatever happened would not have happened if that individual had not intervened. Action is a continuous process, a flow, in which the reflexive monitoring which the individual maintains is fundamental to the control of the body that actors ordinarily sustain throughout their day-to-day lives. (Giddens, 1984, p. 9)

To elaborate more on Giddens's (1984) view on agency, Kidd (2002) explained that

> agency is about choice and the freedom to exercise that choice. It is about the ability of an individual to imagine the outcome of a social encounter and to act

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> in such a way as to achieve that outcome. Central to this notion of agency is the idea of reflexivity, which is people's ability to think about themselves and others around them. People are the product of their experiences, but they can try to shape and mould these experiences. (p. 75)

On the other hand, another intellectual of the same period as Anthony Giddens, Anthony Cohen, argued that despite the available choices and the supposed freedom to pick and choose among those choices, humans are "social beings" who are tied to their culture and hence cannot be considered completely free (Kidd, 2002, p. 75). Cohen's statement in his 1994 publication was summarized by Kidd (2002) that

> [t]o see humans as creative and totally free in everything they do would be to ignore power and the importance of the group. It overstates the amount of freedom we have 'to be who we wish'…we should see humans as having a 'creative self', but they have been given the ability and power to be creative because of culture, not despite it, or because of its absence. (p. 75)

Nonetheless, Cohen (1994) recognized that a certain extent of freedom of choice exists, and agency plays a role in the exercise of such freedom, as he explained that "culture offers us a range of choices to choose from in a creative fashion. Culture provides us with the possibilities for action, but we take responsibility—through our possession of agency—for what we actually do" (Cohen, 1994, cited in Kidd, 2002, p. 75).

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It can be gleaned from the accounts of merely two intellectuals mentioned above that human agency can be looked at in different angles and degrees and thus is not a straightforward concept. Nevertheless, both intellectuals concurred that agency is in some ways related to, or has to do with, the wider society in which individuals live, interact with one another, and as a result exercise their agency. Yet, there are also more oppressive views on individuals in relation to the society. For instance, "functionalist sociologists" consider human socialization as a means "to ensure that the individual conforms to the rules of the wider group," and, even more severe, "Marxist sociologists" consider human socialization "a form of social control whereby the masses are expected to conform to dominant rules" (Kidd, 2002, p. 18). The views of these two groups of sociologists hence further illustrate both the variation and the complexity of the concept. Thus, instead of attempting to offer a finite definition of agency—which is perhaps nonexistent, as Hitlin and Elder Jr. (2007) pointed out that "[a]gency remains a slippery concept because of inconsistent definitions across theoretical projects" (p. 171)—the next section will present perspectives and theories of key intellectuals in the various fields where human agency has been researched and conceptualized.

2.2.2 Perspectives and theories on human agency

Even though human agency is a concept that is initially studied in sociology, its research and application has spread to various fields such as anthropology, psychology, and organizational management, to name a few. In this section, perspectives and theories on human agency offered by key intellectuals in the fields that are relevant to this study will be discussed.

2.2.2.1 Individuals vs. structure perspective

As previously mentioned, the theme of individuals versus society or structure is central to the arguments and opinions on human agency in the field of sociology. Focusing on views that recognize individuals as creative and capable of exercising agency in the society—that is, those that do not consider the society merely a means to govern human action—four key intellectuals emerged in contemporary sociology: Erving Goffman, Anthony Giddens, Jürgen Habermas, and Pierre Bourdieu. The views of each will be discussed briefly below.

The first perspective to consider is that of sociologist Erving Goffman. Goffman likened social life to a stage performance, which he termed "dramaturgical analogy," in that

- humans play many different roles;
- they follow certain scripts that are relevant in some situations but not in others;
- individuals give 'front stage' and 'back stage' performances; and,
- interaction—since it is social by nature—is a performance to an audience. (Goffman, 1971, cited in Kidd, 2002, p. 76)

This analogy came about from Goffman's participant-observation studies on people's everyday life in various environments. Goffman found that "humans are creative in

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the sense that they think about the interactions they have and the contexts in which these interactions take place, and about their and others' motives for action" (Kidd, 2002, p. 76). As a result, individuals "adopt many different roles, many different identities" and perform "impression management" in order to control the situation, to obtain the object of desire, or to influence the behavior of others (Kidd, 2002, p. 77).

While Goffman's analogy is valid to the extent that individuals are capable of evaluating the situations and "follow certain scripts that are relevant" in order to exercise their agency accordingly and achieve their personal aim, other sociologists argue that not all of the scripts and the roles that individuals play out are a product of individual creativity or agency. Some scripts and roles are, in fact, written for such individuals even before they are born. This is a matter of the underlying structure of the society and is a predominant topic in the works of the second sociologist to be discussed in this section, Anthony Giddens. In *The Constitution of Society*, Giddens explained that there exists an interconnection between individuals and society—or, in Giddens's term, structure—and that "[s]tructure is not 'external' to individuals…it is in a certain sense more 'internal' than exterior to their activities…[and]…[s]tructure is not to be equated with constraint but is always both constraining and enabling" (Giddens, 1984, p. 25). What Giddens meant is that, individuals are "born into" the existing structure created and maintained by others, the components of which—such as norms, values, and language—both govern and enable actions of such individuals (Kidd, 2002, p. 79). At the same time, as individuals grow up and perform various actions through an exercise of their agency, they also contribute to the creation and maintenance of the structure in which they live.

Similar to Goffman, Giddens considered individuals "skilled performers" who have "a great deal of knowledge about the rules of society, and when using these rules they are sensitive to variations in old situations and the problems of new encounters" (Kidd, 2002, p. 79). However, as mentioned in the quote from his book above, Giddens emphasized that even though individuals are enabled by the structure to make choices and exercise their agency, they are still controlled by that very structure, hence, he concluded, "[t]he realm of human agency is bounded" (Giddens, 1976, cited in Kidd, 2002, p. 79).

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A different angle of individuals-versus-structure perspective is taken up by the third sociologist, Jürgen Habermas. Like Goffman and Giddens, Habermas was interested in action of individuals in the society, but his focus lay in the aspect of communicative action, specifically “how and why people act as they do” when they engage in social interaction (Kidd, 2002, p. 81). Habermas pointed out the existence of power inequality in a capitalist society in which “the masses are constrained by economic structures and therefore have no power,” thus implying the differing degree that individuals can exercise their agency, a point that was absent in Giddens’s view and for which Giddens was criticized (Habermas, 1981, cited in Kidd, 2002, p. 81). Habermas also distinguished two types of human action: One is instrumental action, which is action driven by desired end results, and another is rational action, which is action that involves more critical thinking, leading to better understanding of both self and others. To “break free” from social inequality, Habermas claimed, individuals must engage in rational action, through evaluation of their social situation, and communicate freely and actively with other members of their society to determine what appropriate action must be taken and how such action must be performed (Kidd, 2002, p. 81). Thus, for Habermas, agency is achieved when individuals become free through, or as a result of, their critical, rational action in social engagement.

The fourth sociologist to be discussed in this section is Pierre Bourdieu, who, like Habermas, also brought the concepts of capitalism and social inequality into his theory. Influenced by philosopher Karl Marx, Bourdieu believed that “capital formed the foundation of social life and dictated one’s position within the social order,” and “the more capital one has, the more powerful a position one occupies in social life” (Longhofer & Winchester, 2016). However, Bourdieu went one step further than Habermas and Marx by applying the notion of economic capital to culture and establishing the concept of cultural capital. Cultural capital consists of “symbolic elements”—such as material possession, taste preference, educational degree, and language dialect—that individuals within a particular social group obtain or develop as members (Longhofer & Winchester, 2016). While cultural capital produces a sense of identity, or collective identity, it also introduces social inequality, as certain elements of cultural capital exhibit more or less values than others.

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The “deeply ingrained” cultural capital of individuals is referred to by Bourdieu as the notion of “habitus,” and it is habitus that helps individuals “successfully navigate social environments” without the need of much conscious effort (Longhofer & Winchester, 2016). However, it is also this ingrained characteristic of habitus that the concept is often misinterpreted as something that is “natural” or “habitual” as opposed to something that is “culturally developed” (Longhofer & Winchester, 2016). In addition, critics of Bourdieu pointed out that, while the notion of habitus seems to offer an alternative view to the individuals-versus-structure debate, it is in fact “heavily over-determined by social process” (Rapport & Overing, 2007, p. 5). Consequently, in this regard, individuals’ capability to exercise agency seems to be relegated simply to a passive, habitual reaction to social structure (Rapport & Overing, 2007).

2.2.2.2 Ecological perspective

In light of the works put forth by the aforementioned sociologists whose accounts on human agency focused on individuals in relation to society or structure, more recent theorists in sociology and related fields have concurred that “positing a strict dualism between agency and structure is erroneous” (Hitlin & Elder Jr., 2007, p. 172). As such, two prominent sociologists, Mustafa Emirbayer and Ann Mische, suggested that human agency be looked at from a different perspective. Emirbayer and Mische (1998) argued that earlier sociologists and intellectuals in related fields who attempted to theorize the concept of human agency “have failed to distinguish agency as an analytical category in its own right—with distinctive theoretical dimensions and temporally variable social manifestations,” a result of which was a conception of agency that was “flat and impoverished” and remained “so tightly bound to structure that one loses sight of the different ways in which agency actually shapes social action” (pp. 962-963). This is because, as Emirbayer and Mische (1998) extrapolated, the perspective or theory put forth by prior intellectuals was based on “one-sided points of view,” focusing on discrete constituents that make up human agency—such as habit, self-goal and purpose, and personal judgment—and had thus failed to capture “a sense of the dynamic *interplay* among these [constituents] and of how this interplay varies within different structural contexts of action” (Emirbayer & Mische,

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1998, p. 963, emphasis in original). In addition, Emirbayer and Mische (1998) also considered that temporality—the element of time progression—also plays an essential role in how human agency is exercised. Therefore, they proposed a "reconceptualization" of human agency that is distinctive in two respects. First, Emirbayer and Mische (1998) argued for the interplay—as opposed to the independence—of constituents that make up human agency. Second, they also take the element of time, in addition to the element of structure (referred to as "context" or "environment"), into consideration. Together, this reconceptualization results in a description of human agency as

> a temporally embedded process of social engagement, informed by the past (in its habitual aspect), but also oriented toward the future (as a capacity to imagine alternative possibilities) and toward the present (as a capacity to contextualize past habits and future projects within the contingencies of the moment). The agentic dimension of social action can only be captured in its full complexity…if it is analytically situated within the flow of time. (Emirbayer & Mische, 1998, p. 963)

As the element of time is important to how Emirbayer and Mische's (1998) human agency plays out, the two sociologists also described their conceptualization of time in more detail. Three time dimensions—constituting "the agentic dimension of social action"—were defined and given formal terminology by Emirbayer and Mische (1998) as follows:

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1. The iterational dimension

The iterational dimension—or the orientation toward the past—is defined as "the selective reactivation by actors of past patterns of thought and action, as routinely incorporated in practical activity, thereby giving stability and order to social universes and helping to sustain identities, interactions, and institutions over time" (p. 971). This orientation toward the past is exhibited in "actors' abilities to recall, to select, and to appropriately apply the more or less tacit and taken-for-granted [patterns] of action that they have developed through past interactions" (1998, p. 975).

2. The projective dimension

The projective dimension—or the orientation toward the future—is said to encompass "the imaginative generation by actors of possible future trajectories of action, in which received structures of thought and action may be creatively reconfigured in relation to actors' hopes, fears, and desires for the future" (p. 971). This orientation toward the future is demonstrated through the fact that

> human actors do not merely repeat past routines; they are also the inventors of new possibilities for thought and action…As they respond to the challenges and uncertainties of social life,…they move 'beyond themselves' into the future and construct changing images of where they think they are going, where they want to go, and how they can get there from where they are at present. (pp. 983-984)

3. The practical-evaluative dimension

The practical-evaluative dimension—or the orientation toward the present—refers to "the capacity of actors to make practical and normative judgments among alternative possible trajectories of action, in response to the emerging demands, dilemmas, and ambiguities of presently evolving situations" (p. 971). This orientation toward the present can be considered an "exercise of situationally based judgment" that actors must make in response to "the demands and contingencies of the present," as "[e]ven relatively unreflective routine dispositions must be adjusted to the exigencies of changing situations; and newly imagined projects must be brought down to earth within real-world circumstances" (p. 994).

These three time dimensions together form "a *chordal triad* of agency" (Emirbayer & Mische, 1998, p. 972, emphasis in original), which means that individuals—or "social actors"—are said to be "oriented toward the past, the future, and the present at any given moment," although a particular "emergent situation" may necessitate a particular time orientation to become dominant (p. 964). For example, an action of someone driving along his or her neighborhood streets may be dominated by his or her routine or habit (the iterational dimension), but unforeseen traffic condition or road construction may call for a detour, thus the need to figure out an alternative route (the projective dimension). Together, these two temporal orientations inform the required decision and action for that particular driving situation (the practical-evaluative dimension). Therefore, for this actor, all three temporal orientations are all at once present and interact with one another, forming an on-the-spot action—the practical-evaluative dimension—that is dominated by the iterational dimension yet also determined in part by the projective dimension.

The chordal triad of agency also implies that, as context changes, the actors' temporal orientation toward such context can also change. Therefore, actors are "capable of changing their relations to structure," a process which Emirbayer and Mische (1998) called "a change in agentic orientation" and hence a view that human agency is dynamic and "composed of variable and changing orientations within the flow of time" (p. 964). Through examination of the change in actors' agentic orientation, Emirbayer and Mische (1998) claimed, researchers can gain insights into the "varying degrees of maneuverability, inventiveness, and reflective choice shown by social actions in relation to the constraining and enabling contexts of action" (p. 964). Emirbayer and Mische (1998) also remarked how it is crucial to recognize that "[t]he ways in which people understand their own relationship to the past, future, and present *make a difference* to their actions" (p. 973, emphasis in original), and it is through these very actions—that is, through human agency—that social structure is both "dynamically sustained…and also altered" (p. 964). In short, the reconceptualization of human agency is summed up and given a definition by Emirbayer and Mische (1998) as

> the temporally constructed engagement by actors of different structural environments—the temporal-relational contexts of action—which, through the interplay of habit, imagination, and judgment, both reproduces and transforms those structures in interactive response to the problems posed by changing historical situations. (p. 970, italics formatting removed)

The reconceptualization of human agency discussed above quite apparently demonstrates Emirbayer and Mische's (1998) attempt to be comprehensive in taking all relevant elements into consideration—the external elements of structure and time as well as the internal elements of individuals' past habits, future projections, and

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present decisions and actions. Emirbayer and Mische's (1998) reconceptualization of human agency was then taken one step further by Mark Priestley, Gert Biesta, and Sarah Robinson (2015), who saw agency as "an emergent phenomenon of the ecological conditions through which it is enacted" and therefore called their theorization of human agency "an ecological approach" (Priestley et al., 2015, p. 22). The authors described an ecological approach to human agency as follows:

> This concept of agency highlights that actors always act *by means* of an environment rather than simply in an environment…[so] the achievement of agency will always result from the interplay of individual efforts, available resources and contextual and structural 'factors' as they come together in particular and, in a sense, always unique situations. (Biesta & Tedder, 2007, p. 137, cited in Priestley et al., 2015, p. 22, emphasis in original)

According to these authors' view, agency is not a feature that humans are born with—that is, agency is "not something that people can *have* or *possess*" but "something that people *do* or *achieve*" (Biesta & Tedder, 2006; Priestley et al., 2015, p. 22, emphasis in original). The authors further explained that "agency denotes a quality of the *engagement* of actors with temporal-relational contexts-for-action, not a quality of the actors themselves" (Biesta et al., 2015, p. 626, emphasis in original).

Integrating Emirbayer and Mishce's (1998) perspective into their ecological approach—by examining the interplay of individuals' three temporal dimensions as well as the interaction of individuals with structure and time, or the ecology—Priestley et al.'s (2015) conception of human agency reflects Emirbayer and Mische's (1998) view that agency is a process, rather than a product. Moreover, Priestley et al. (2015) asserted that this ecological approach "helps to understand not only how humans are able to be reflexive and creative, acting counter to societal constraints, but also how individuals are enabled and constrained by their social and material environments…[and] how capacity and context interact to form agency" (p. 23).

The emphasis of the ecological approach on *how* agency is achieved over *where* agency resides makes it particularly apt for investigating a specific type of human agency—that is, agency of teachers or *teacher agency*. This is because the aim of research on teacher agency is to understand how teacher agency is manifested and

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achieved in a variety of educational ecologies, rather than to explain where teachers' social action originates (Biesta et al., 2015; Priestley, Biesta, Philippou, & Robinson, 2016). The next section will therefore move on to discuss the notion of teacher agency and review selected literature on current theory and research on teacher agency in various ecological contexts.

2.3 Teacher agency

2.3.1 What is teacher agency?

Researchers in the field of education have increasingly recognized agency as an important factor that contributes to teaching and learning (Biesta et al., 2015; Biesta & Tedder, 2006, 2007; Campbell, 2012; Edwards, 2015; Feryok, 2012; Fullan, 1993; Gurney & Liyanage, 2016; Priestley et al., 2016; Priestley et al., 2012). Agency of teachers, or teacher agency, in its simplest term is defined by Biesta et al. (2015) as "agency that is theorized specifically in respect of the activities of teachers in schools" (p. 625), and such activities involve teachers' "active contribution to shaping their work and its conditions" (p. 624). Undoubtedly, a big part of teachers' "work and its conditions" has much to do with students. Therefore, Campbell (2012) offered a more detailed description of teacher agency as teachers' "[a]ttentiveness to [their] own practice as well as to the enhancement of others' (most notably students') well-being and indeed agency" (p. 189) and explained that there are two levels of teacher agency. One is teacher agency at the level of self, which is

> a teacher's commitment to governing his or her professional practice according to deeply held values, convictions, and beliefs about teaching, learning, and epistemology. The teacher's capacity to engage students in curricular experiences that are compatible with these values is a powerful measure of his or her agential potential. (p. 184)

Another is teacher agency at the level of others, which is what Campbell (2012) called "an extension of [teacher] agency," and this transpires because "teachers need to respect the agency of their students as autonomous human beings…teachers need also to consider this from the point of view of cultivating and fostering student agency" (p. 184).

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Despite the increasing attention and research on agency in the field of education, the goal of education researchers in studying teacher agency is different from that of sociologists in studying human agency. For instance, as previously mentioned, Biesta et al. (2015) and Priestley et al. (2016) stated that the goal of studying teacher agency is not to explain the origin of teachers' social action but to understand "the phenomenon of [teacher] agency itself and…how [teacher] agency is achieved in concrete settings and in and through particular ecological conditions and circumstances" (Biesta et al., 2015, p. 626). Other researchers believe that teacher agency is an attribute worth studying—and cultivating—because it is potentially a source of teachers' "transformative power" (Hornberger, 2020, cited in Ollerhead, 2010, p. 609). With teacher agency, Hornberger (2000) asserted, "teachers have the potential to occupy transformative roles, even within highly constraining policy environments" (Ollerhead, 2010, p. 609).

Transformation is not the only capacity brought about by teacher agency. Resistance to imposing change is also another form of agency exercised by teachers, which can be exhibited individually or collectively. This is observed by Robinson (2012) who defined teacher agency as "the individual and collective actions of a group of teachers" (p. 232) and noted that agency in educational context could be as much about teachers effecting change as about teachers resisting change. Citing Hilferty (2008), Robinson (2012) elaborated on the concept of teacher agency as "the power of teachers (both individually and collectively) to actively and purposefully direct their own working lives within structurally determined limits" (p. 167). In this sense, Robinson's (2012) conception of teacher agency also concerned

> the extent to which control is achieved by a group of teachers, and is reliant upon the dialogical relationship between external constraints and structures and the political and economic environment, in balance with the individual and collective life experiences of the group. (p. 234)

Such matters of power and control exhibited through teacher agency hence implies that, whether resisting or conforming with the forces presented by their external context, teachers are capable of making "active contribution to shaping their work and its condition" (Biesta et al., 2015, p. 624).

From the definition exemplified above, it can be gleaned that the concept of teacher agency revolves around the individual and collective power of teachers, the overarching structure—e.g., institutional environment or education policy—imposed on the context in which teachers operate, and the teachers' intention or action to bring about or resist change in response to the imposed structure. However, the task of studying teacher agency in a particular context is neither simple nor straightforward. In *Beliefs, Agency and Identity in Foreign Language Learning and Teaching*, co-authors Paula Kalaja, Ana Maria F. Barcelos, Mari Aro, and Maria Ruohotie-Lyhty found in their studies that agency is strongly tied with a myriad of other personal aspects—such as beliefs, identity, and emotions—and that all these personal aspects can either remain the same or change over time or across situations (Kalaja, Barcelos, Aro, & Ruohotie-Lyhty, 2015). The authors also acknowledged that much is yet to be investigated and uncovered as to how and to what extent these personal aspects interact with and exert influence on one another—and, as a result, on teacher agency. Thus, the authors urged for more research that is "*contextual*, *longitudinal*, and *interconnected*" so that teacher agency and its related matters would be better understood, particularly in the context of foreign language teaching and learning (Kalaja et al., 2015, p. 4, emphasis in original).

2.3.2 Factors affecting teacher agency

2.3.2.1 Enablement of and constraint on teacher agency

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Felton and Koestler (2015) offered a suggestion on the ways in which teacher agency can be promoted—that is, through better understanding of the possibilities in a given teaching and learning context and through providing teachers the means to actualize those possibilities. In spite of its insightfulness, this suggestion is perhaps too simplistic. Alternatively, what Pantić (2015) has found to enable teacher agency is a characteristic called "self-efficacy," defined as "a capacity to have an effect…shaped by the extent to which we believe we can do something or achieve a worthy outcome" (p. 768). Self-efficacy is recognized in social cognitive theory to be the "central mechanism for exercise of human agency" (Bandura, 1997, cited in Pantić, 2015, p. 768). This is because people's perception of their self-efficacy—termed *perceived self-efficacy* by Bandura (1989)—indicates how much they believe they are capable and hence determines "[people's] level of motivation, as reflected in how much effort they will exert in an endeavor and how long they will persevere in the face of obstacles" (Bandura, 1989, p. 1176).

Like agency, self-efficacy is dependent on the context in which it is exercised and thus is not a fixed attribute of a person. The determining factor could be something that is already internal to an individual—such as personal competence or level of authority that he or she has—or something external that is beyond an individual's control—such as available resources or policy imposed on his or her environment (Pantić, 2015). Indeed, presence—or absence—and adequacy of certain internal or external factors in the work environment can affect teachers' level of perceived self-efficacy and, consequently, achievement of teacher agency. Hindering instances found by Pantić (2015) include, but are not limited to, teachers' feeling of hopelessness that a better situation would never ensue, conflicts with authoritative figures, and insufficient understanding of their work context, especially of the burgeoning issues that in fact spur the former two matters. Pantić (2015) also found that past studies documented how socio-political factors, such as education policy that imposes attainment targets, thwart teachers' "freedom to act according to their professional judgment and consciences" (Flores, 2004; Frost, 2006, cited in Pantić, 2015, p. 771). As such, it can be seen that various internal and external factors are at play when it comes to whether or not teacher agency can be exercised and, as suggested by Priestley et al. (2015), achieved.

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2.3.2.2 Achievement of teacher agency

Priestley et al. (2015) argued that teacher agency is a phenomenon that should be considered in terms of achievement rather than possession and that it is formed through teachers' interaction with their environment—just as human agency is an "interplay of individuals' capacities and environment conditions" (p. 3). Even so, the formation and achievement of teacher agency is anything but "once and for all" (Pantić, 2015, p. 768). As noted earlier, how and how much individuals can achieve agency depends not only on factors residing within the individuals but also on those residing in the ecology in which they live and work (Biesta et al., 2015). Thus, the level of achievement of agency can very well fluctuate with changes in the environment.

When the environment changes—whether resulting from an individual moving into new surroundings or from transformations of the surroundings themselves—the extent that agency can be exercised an achieved by an individual also changes. Teacher agency is no exception. Pantić (2015) stated clearly that "[h]ow teachers practice their agency is expected to depend considerably on the contingencies of the contexts (of school, policy or broader societal and cultural environments) that can be seen as structures and cultures" and that "[a] competent agent…will act differently in different contexts and at different times depending, for example, on the ways he or she perceives the locus of power or collective efficacy" (p. 768).

Yet, achievement of teacher agency does not necessarily mean always acting in tandem with the "contingencies of the contexts" mentioned by Pantić (2015). As Robinson (2012) found in her ethnographic research in a non-government school in western Australia, teachers exercise their agency by obeying as well as resisting the national education policy imposed on the school. This then leads to an important question, as put forward by Feryok (2012), "How do teachers learn to act on their own goals, whether or not they align with those of society?" (p. 96). In raising this question, Feryok (2012) pointed out that investigation into this query could help researchers find out how teachers—or, specifically in Feryok's (2012) study, language teachers—develop a "sense of agency" (p. 96). Likewise, in an editorial published in the same year, Campbell (2012) urged researchers of teacher agency to ask "What do [teachers] strive for as a result of their own agency and what do they similarly aim to facilitate in their students' ongoing development of agency?" (p. 184) in order to find out teachers' purpose of exercising their agency.

To what extent teachers can achieve agency, and whether or not change will occur, depends to a large degree on teachers' own perception of their role. Archer (2000, cited in Pantić, 2015) noted the difference between teachers as "role-takers" who are passive and teachers as "role-makers" who are active (p. 771). Not surprisingly, the latter are the agentive teachers who see themselves as capable of change, and hence act in determination to bring about such change (Pantić, 2015). In this regard, another determinant of the achievement of teacher agency is culture. This

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is because culture—whether at the micro level of a school or at the macro level of a society—plays an important role in identity formation, a process that is linked with how teachers perceive themselves and their roles and in turn determines the level of their actions, whether to simply be passive role-takers or to keenly become agentive role-makers. Therefore, teacher agency is also culture-driven, both in terms of how it is conceived and how it is interpreted (Pantić, 2015, p. 771).

2.3.2.3 Being agentive teachers

According to Campbell (2012), being agentive teachers means being able to "reflect the implementation, interpretation, adaptation, alteration, substitution, subversion, and/or creation of the curriculum contexts in which they [the teachers] work" (p. 183). That is, agentive teachers are viewed as those who bring about actions and changes at the ultimate implementation level—at school and, more specifically, in the classroom. On the same token, even though not explicitly articulating the term teacher agency, Shulman (1986) said of "three significant attributes of the actors [teachers]" which are "potential determinants of teaching and learning in the classroom" (p. 7). Such attributes are capacities, actions, and thoughts and are further elaborated as follows:

> *Capacities* are the relatively stable and enduring characteristics of ability, propensity, knowledge, or character inhering in the actors, yet capable of change through either learning or development. *Actions* comprise the activities, performances, or behavior of actors, the observable physical or speech acts of teachers and students. *Thoughts* are the cognitions, metacognitions, emotions, purposes—the tacit mental and emotional states that precede, accompany, and follow the observable actions, frequently foreshadowing (or reflecting) changes in the more enduring capacities. Both thoughts and behavior can become capacities (in the form, for example, of knowledge and habits or skills). (Shulman, 1986, pp. 7-8, emphasis in original)

However, being agentive teachers does not merely mean being good teachers or having good teaching skills. While doing research in order to develop a model of teacher agency for social justice, Pantić (2015) found that teachers who are agentive tend to have more professional engagement with matters beyond teaching, such as

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taking part in school development, participating in professional networking, or initiating peer collaboration. Indeed, the Advisory Committee with whom Pantić (2015) worked acknowledged that "building capacity for transformative agency might be more about the ways of engaging [teachers] with given workplace structures and cultures, than about teaching teachers *what* they need to do" and emphasized teachers' "engagement with other agents" as an important foundation to the achievement of teacher agency (Pantić, 2015, p. 765, emphasis in original).

2.3.2.4 Importance of teacher agency

A thought-provoking irony in education at present was pointed out by Felton and Koestler (2015), who found through their research that, on the one hand, current pedagogical approach appears to favor student-centered learning, an approach in which teachers must be reflective as well as reflexive toward students' needs but at the same time able to maintain control in the classroom. On the other hand, there also appears to be more standardization in education, placing ever more accountability on teachers to follow prescribed principles. This irony, Felton and Koestler (2015) asserted, is the very reason why teacher agency is important. The authors concluded that they "view agency as a critical component to the teaching *profession*. As professionals, it is fundamental that teachers have the ability to actively shape their practice in ways that draws on existing research and reflection on their own practice" (p. 273, emphasis in original).

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The importance of teacher agency in the teaching profession is also stressed by Gurney and Liyanage (2016). The authors suggested that teacher agency is central to successful professional development of teachers because "[t]eacher agency is critical in construction of knowledge about teaching and learning through workplace learning, and in navigation of [challenges in] professional development" (p. 52). Gurney and Liyanage (2016) also suggested that it is teacher agency that will help teachers successfully perform their role as "agents of change," as "[a]gency is utilized by teachers to facilitate change that reflects their identities, which are reflexively informed by many personal and contextual factors within a given community" (p. 53), hence another reason why teacher agency is crucial.

Expanding on this notion of teachers acting as "agents of change," Pantić (2015) made an opening remark in her article that, increasingly, teachers "are called upon to act as agents of change" by education policy in many countries around the world (p. 759), and teacher agency is recognized as an important attribute that helps teachers play a more active role in contributing to teaching and learning (Biesta et al., 2015; Campbell, 2012; Pantić, 2015; Priestley et al., 2015; Priestley et al., 2012). An example of education policy that calls for teachers to act as agents of change is the Curriculum for Excellence—a curriculum reform in Scotland, formally put into effect in the 2010–2011 academic year. Instead of spelling out standardized guidelines for teachers to follow, this policy emphasizes teacher engagement throughout the teaching and learning process and encourages idea-sharing among teachers—from issues of purposes of education, to personal teaching values, right down to classroom practices (Priestley et al., 2015, p. 1). Priestley et al. (2015) observed that such policy marks a "(re)turn to teacher agency," as education policies in Scotland during the past several decades had been rolled out with "prescriptive curricula and limiting and sometimes oppressive regimes of testing, inspection and bureaucratic forms of accountability," all of which suppressed teacher's role and ridded them of teacher agency (p. 2). This "(re)turn to teacher agency" in education policy means that teacher agency is recognized as a "key dimension of teachers' professionalism" and that teachers are encouraged to "exert higher degrees of professional judgement and discretion" in their work context (Priestley et al., 2015, p. 2).

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This call for more teacher agency is not limited only to the education system of western cultures. Education policy in favor of teachers acting as agents of change has been enacted in areas as remote as Inner Mongolia in China (Liyanage, Bartlett, Walker, & Guo, 2015) and as far south of the globe as Australia (Robinson, 2012). However, the type of change expected of teachers, and how teachers should—or could—go about implementing such change is still very much obscure to researchers, let alone to the teachers who themselves are the alleged agents to bring about the mandated change (Pantić, 2015). Yet, a precursor to change, whether policy-stipulated or otherwise, is believed to lie in teacher agency which, as discussed in the sections that came afore, is a concept that is still very little understood despite an emerging research trend. Therefore, the next section will attempt to capture current theory and research on teacher agency from various literature.

2.4 Current theory and research on teacher agency

2.4.1 Approaches in analyzing and theorizing teacher agency

As with research on human agency, an investigation of teacher agency involves examining interwoven variables, both physical and non-physical, that constitute actions that may be intentional yet can at times be driven by intuition. This is particularly why teacher agency is a complex notion to grasp and analyze with specificity and precision. Current literature suggests different approaches to studying teacher agency, some of which draw upon previously established approaches in sociology or related fields and are given a different name, while some may reflect those preceding approaches without claiming a new moniker. However, it appears that all approaches recognize the fact that teacher agency cannot be looked at in isolation, as agency is in itself shaped by and achieved through an amalgam of elements.

A case in point is seen in Pantić (2015). While the author did not use specific terminology for her approach on how teacher agency should be investigated and analyzed, she recognized that agency is "temporal" in nature and "context-embedded" in that, under a certain circumstance, an agent may bring forth transformative actions, while under other circumstances, that same agent may merely assume a participating role (p. 765). Echoing Bandura (1989)—who said of human agency as "[t]he capacity to exercise control over one's own thought processes, motivation, and action" (p. 1175)—Pantić (2015) explained that human agency is brought about by individuals' interaction with the environment. That is, "[p]eople are producers as well as products of social systems," and whether or not such individuals will or can exercise agency depends both on the individuals themselves and on the context (Pantić, 2015, p. 768). Thus, with this notion in mind, Pantić (2015) suggested that teacher agency be empirically investigated and analyzed as per individual teachers—e.g., their roles, beliefs, or purposes in and beyond the profession—and as per their environment—e.g., classroom resources, departmental culture, or institutional policy. Also, should change also be a unit of the investigation, Pantić (2015) added, such change must be looked at in terms of its content and purpose—e.g., what is expected of teachers and why—in relation to its surrounding context—e.g., whether and to what extent the school culture is conducive to the impending change.

The connection between individuals and their environment is also mentioned in Gurney and Liyanage (2016). Citing Wilson and Deany (2010), Gurney and Liyanage (2016) referred to agency as “an individual’s capacity to plan and enact change, direct and regulate their actions…and influence external events and environments” (Gurney & Liyanage, 2016, p. 52). Again, even though the authors did not specifically name their approach, the suggestion that the exercise of teacher agency should be analyzed in terms of individuals in relation to their surrounding context is apparent. Gurney and Liyanage (2016) also described how teacher agency could and should be analyzed in relation to teachers’ personal qualities, such as identity, capacity, and goals, as well as to the larger community of practice to which the teachers belong. Such approach of analysis is necessary because, as the authors argued by referring to Lieberman (2009),

> [w]hilst we may consider that [community of practice] actively positions teachers in certain ways, we must acknowledge that teachers may also exercise their agentive capacity to position or reposition themselves in line with their own goals within a professional community. Their goals are not fixed, but are rather results of interactions between the agent and the structures or cultures within which they operate. (Gurney & Liyanage, 2016, p. 53)

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While the studies mentioned above did not cite or coin any particular name for their approach, other studies directly mentioned the source of their framework. For instance, in her research on language teacher agency, Feryok (2012) framed her study according to a notion within sociocultural perspective called “activity theory” which “considers the roles of both the individual and the social in activity” (p. 96). Feryok’s (2012) rationale for using activity theory is that it is “relevant for language teaching and for language teacher development, much of which occurs within an activity system regulated by the state, where the goals of language teachers may be reinforced or constrained by the motives of the state school system” (p. 96). Theory name notwithstanding, Feryok’s (2012) approach reiterates the necessity of looking at the interaction—or, to use the term of the theory, the "activity"—of individuals and the larger context in order to understand agency of language teachers.

In spite of the dissimilarity in framework origin, a commonality is present in the seven studies reported in *Beliefs, Agency and Identity in Foreign Language Learning and Teaching*. All studies in this book follow what the authors called "the contextual approaches"—inspired by discursive social psychology, sociocultural theory, and dialogical views on language teaching and learning, to name a few (Kalaja et al., 2015, p. 5). In the contextual approaches, personal traits "are no longer viewed as psychological constructs residing in students' or teachers' minds but as constructs that emerge in specific contexts and that are co-constructed in interaction with others" (Kalaja et al., 2015, p. 5). Thus, the importance of context and interaction between individuals and such context is once again brought to the fore.

Looking deeper into the approaches used in the book, Ruohotie-Lyhty, one of the co-authors, based her research on a theory which from its name clearly denotes the linkage between individuals and their environment—"the ecological theory." This ecological theory was put forth by van Lier (2004) who claimed that the theory "does not try to explain individual development solely on the basis of either the individual or the environment, but emphasizes a meaningful and unique relationship between the two" (van Lier, 2004, p. 3, cited in Kalaja et al., 2015, pp. 150-151). As part of the theory, van Lier (2004) also introduced the term *affordances*, which is defined as "the possibilities for action that the environment offers to the individual…[and are the] necessary support, tools or space which the environment affords to an individual" (van Lier, 2004, p. 79, cited in Kalaja et al., 2015, p. 151). In addition to affordances, the ecological theory is also founded on the assumption that individuals see their environment either as an enabler of or as a constraint on their action. Yet, this does not mean that individuals are at the mercy of the environment. Rather, individuals are agentive and hence are in control of their own action. They possess the capacity to act, or refuse to act, based upon their evaluation of the available affordances and the enabling or constraining nature of the environment (van Lier, 2004; Withagen et al., 2012, cited in Kalaja et al., 2015). In this regard, agency of the individuals and the affordances offered by the environment are said to be interdependent, such that "[a]cting is not possible without suitable affordances. However, the possibilities

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offered by existing affordances are also dependent on the individuals' capacities and willingness to use them" (van Lier, 2004, cited in Kalaja et al., 2015, p. 151).

Based on van Lier's (2004) ecological theory, Ruohotie-Lyhty claimed that, because a person's engagement with his or her environment is subject to his or her own interpretation of such environment, a person's experience and the meaning given to such experience is highly individualistic. This explains why, in Ruohotie-Lyhty's research, the extent that novice foreign language teachers struggled in the schools in which they started their career varied even though they were placed in similar environments. Ruohotie-Lyhty found that, while the novice teachers in her study all faced challenging circumstances during the first couple years of their profession, the way these teachers perceived themselves and their environment led to different interpretations of such circumstances. This in turn resulted in different degrees of agency being exercised and achieved and, consequently, different levels of struggles being experienced (Kalaja et al., 2015).

There is also another prominent group of researchers who are in favor of an ecological perspective toward teacher agency, albeit based on a framework of different intellectuals. Gert Biesta, Richard Edwards, Kate Miller, Stavroula Philippou, Andrea Priestley, Mark Priestley, Michael Tedder, and Sarah Robinson are such researchers whose works on human agency as well as teacher agency employ an "ecological approach" informed by the framework of Emirbayer and Mische (1998). As discussed in detail in the previous section, the ecological approach based on Emirbayer and Mische (1998) sees agency as "an emergent phenomenon of the ecological conditions through which it is enacted" (Priestley et al., 2015, p. 22) and considers agency as an achievement rather than a possession because

> actors always act *by means* of an environment rather than simply in an environment…[so] the achievement of agency will always result from the interplay of individual efforts, available resources and contextual and structural 'factors' as they come together in particular and, in a sense, always unique situations. (Biesta & Tedder, 2007, p. 137, emphasis in original)

With research efforts spanning over a decade, some of which were commissioned by governmental bureaus, this group of researchers have studied various accounts of agency among various groups of participants. Some of their works included a study of

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human agency in adults going through transitions in life, as part of the Learning Lives: Learning, Identity and Agency in the Life Course project funded by the Economic and Social Research Council in the United Kingdom (Biesta & Tedder, 2006, 2007); research on teacher agency, studying how non-government school teachers reacted to a new education policy in Australia (Robinson, 2012); government-commissioned research on teacher agency of primary and secondary school teachers under the Curriculum for Excellence policy in Scotland (Biesta et al., 2015; Priestley et al., 2015; Priestley et al., 2012); and a publication on how teacher agency can inform curriculum development (Priestley et al., 2016). Despite the difference in participants and research contexts, all of the studies conducted by this group of researchers demonstrated that the environment—or the ecology, to use their terminology—can affect agency of individuals, yet, on the same token, through agency, individuals can also affect the ecology in which they live and work.

Based on the selected research discussed in this section, it can be seen that the approaches used in analyzing and theorizing teacher agency, whether or not formally named, all recognize the importance of the interrelationship between individuals and their environment, not in terms of a causal relationship *per se* but more of a "mutually constitutive" one (Kalaja et al., 2015, p. 151). Gleaning from the studies just mentioned as well as from other relevant research, the next section will present key issues that have emerged from current literature on teacher agency.

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2.4.2 Current issues in teacher agency

As previously discussed, achievement of teacher agency depends on various factors, many of which lie beyond teachers' control (Biesta et al., 2015). Therefore, not only that agency is not something individuals *have* but *achieve*, but also that achieving it once does not mean achieving it all, as Campbell (2012) aptly remarked that there is constantly an "ebb and flow of agency" (p. 185). This inconsistency in the achievement of teacher agency stems from issues that are seemingly unrelated from the outset, but a closer analysis reveals that they are intertwined in such a way that even the teachers themselves may not realize. The sections below will attempt to explain key issues in teacher agency, how they relate to one another, and the extent that they influence the achievement of teacher agency.

Issue 1: Inconsistency between beliefs and practice

Priestley et al. (2012) found in their research in an urban secondary school in Scotland that teachers' beliefs—whether personal or professional ones—were not transferred into practice for several reasons. For example, an education policy emphasizing student attainment—e.g., exam results—that also acted as an evaluation of teaching quality fixated teachers on strictly teaching by the book, even if teachers' pedagogical beliefs would have called for a different teaching approach. In some instances, the organizational structure of the school—e.g., hierarchical quality assurance system—prevented teachers from taking risks and exercising their agency to their full potential. Yet in other cases, agency was not exercised due to teachers' lack of experience—e.g., when teachers were new to the profession or entered a new teaching environment. So, despite having positive beliefs in education, the teachers were not able to bring about such beliefs into action. Instances reported by Priestley et al. (2012) illustrate merely some cases in point in which teachers either did not or could not act according to their beliefs, and, as a result, their achievement of teacher agency was hindered.

Issue 2: Absence of long-term discourses about the purpose of education

Teachers' success in achieving teacher agency has much to do with their long-term vision or purposes toward education. Biesta et al. (2015) observed that teachers who lacked "a clear vision about what education is for" (p. 637) seemed to have a limited repertoire of actions that lead to long-term development of education, even though they were efficient in their day-to-day teaching responsibilities. For the most part, this problem stems from the fact that these day-to-day teaching responsibilities require teachers to focus on the *process* of education—e.g., what materials need to be covered in a lesson in order to meet the exam requirement—rather than on the *goal* of education—e.g., what skills are to be developed upon completion of the lesson in order to prepare students for the real world. Therefore, knowingly or not, teachers in the study of Biesta et al. (2015) tended to articulate vision and purposes toward education that were relatively "short-term in nature" or "fairly narrowly conceived" (p. 636). Such narrow vision and purposes, Biesta et al. (2015) claimed, had "implications for the ways in which teachers achieve agency…[because]…[p]urposes

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that are narrowly framed inevitably narrow consideration of what is possible, and frame subsequent action accordingly" (p. 637). As a result, teachers' possible actions—as well as what they believed constitute "possible"—were bounded within the limits created by an "absence of a robust professional discourse about teaching and education" (Biesta et al., 2015, p. 638, italics formatting removed).

Issue 3: Impact from education policy

The discussion on Issue 2 above—problems stemming from absence of long-term discourses about the purpose of education—seems at first glance to imply that teachers are at fault. However, it is important to recognize that such long-term discourses cannot be formed by individual teachers acting alone. Biesta et al. (2015) argued that the blame should instead be put on the "externally imposed systems" that "alter the dynamics of schooling" and leave teachers confused and ill-informed because the resulting changes often come "without the development of a clear philosophy of education to underpin the changes in question, and a professional collegiality that enables its development" (p. 636). The impact from these "externally imposed systems"—or, more specifically, from education policy—not only prevents teachers from exercising their personal beliefs in their actual practice, as discussed in Issue 1, but also puts teachers under the constraints of "systems of accountability" (Biesta et al., 2015, p. 638) in which priorities are given to the process as opposed to the goal of education, as discussed in Issue 2. Thus, it can be argued that the impact from education policy is potentially both the source and the cause of Issue 1 and Issue 2, which consequently impinges upon achievement of teacher agency (more detail of such impact will be discussed in the section below).

Issue 4: Lack of theory and research on teacher agency

Just as teachers' discourses and goals cannot transpire out of thin air, neither can education policy. Education policy is generally written on the grounds of current education-related research and theories. However, the concept of agency does not have its origin in education, and even within the past decade, researchers of teacher agency still acknowledge the lack of sufficient understanding of this concept. For example, in an attempt to create a model to analyze teacher agency in culturally- and socially-diverse educational environment, Pantić (2015) found that very little empirical evidence has thus far been gathered as to how teacher agency takes shape and operates in the context in which teachers work, be it inside a classroom or in the overall school environment. Priestley et al. (2012) also remarked that due to limited research on the concept, “teacher agency is under-theorised and often misconstrued in the educational change literature” (p. 191). Therefore, it is possible that policy makers could themselves be ill-informed due to either the lack of information available to them or the lack of understanding of such information. While policy makers may hope that emphasizing teacher agency—or teachers acting as agents of change—would bring about innovation, hence change, in schools, Priestley et al. (2012) found that recent studies have warned of unintended change—or even “innovation without change” where innovation is “mediated to fit with prior practice,” and no real change in fact ensues (Priestley et al., 2012, p. 193)—as a consequence of promoting a concept that is yet under-researched and not sufficiently understood.

Issue 5: Misconception about the concept of teacher agency

Being a concept that is yet under-researched and not sufficiently understood, misconceptions about what teacher agency is or means abound. Priestley et al. (2012) observed that a major misconception of teacher agency is that “agency and change are seen as synonymous and positive” (p. 191). However, with both policy makers and policy implementers being ill-informed (such as the case of policy makers in Issue 4 and teachers in Issue 2 above), change may not occur. Worse yet, change may occur but in a manner that is unintended by the policy. For example, Priestley et al. (2012) discussed the concept of “negative agency” where teachers demonstrate agency by resisting change rather than effecting such change. In addition, as discussed in Issue 3—impact from education policy—education policy created from misunderstanding, or insufficient understanding, of teacher agency could suppress, instead of cultivate, teacher agency. With existing misconceptions on teacher agency, education policy is ill-conceived and “wrongly” interpreted, resulting in more suppression of teacher agency, hence the unfortunate continuation of such vicious cycle.

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Issue 6: Challenges faced by teachers in achieving teacher agency

Mari Aro, one co-author of *Beliefs, Agency and Identity in Foreign Language Learning and Teaching*, speculated the linkage among beliefs, identity, and agency as follows:

> What I believe about language learning will influence what I think I can—and should—do in order to learn a language. And what my beliefs and actions tell me about my hits and misses in language learning influences how I see myself as a language learner (that is, my identity). (Kalaja et al., 2015, p. 7)

Aro's sentiment reflects the notion of perceived self-efficacy put forth by Bandura (1989) and Pantić (2015), and Aro and her other co-authors reasoned that this sentiment would as well hold true for teachers and their teaching. Moreover, the authors found that, for teachers, not only is there an interconnection among beliefs, identity, and agency, but there is also an additional element that exerts influence into such interconnection—emotions (Kalaja et al., 2015). Indeed, more recent studies such as Benesch (2018) and Miller and Gkonou (2018) also found similar ties between teachers' emotions and other personal dispositions, including agency. Adding to this complexity is the fact that these elements internal to the teachers are also influenced by factors of the external environment, such as education policy being imposed on the school. Thus, as noted by Benesch (2018), when teachers experience intense emotions, notably negative ones, it should not be viewed simply as a reaction to an unpleasant situation but as the fact that "there are problems with current regulations or policies that are provoking emotion labor and need to be addressed" (p. 69). In this regard, physical and emotional challenges that teachers routinely encounter can therefore act as "possible triggers and promoters of language teacher agency" (Benesch, 2018, p. 61). Still, much is yet to be researched, and understood, with respect to the source and the nature of such challenges, so as to find ways to help teachers overcome the obstacles and, in turn, optimize their capacity to exercise teacher agency.

It appears that the source of all issues examined above boils down to inadequate understanding of teacher agency and the elements that constitute teacher agency. It also appears that one of the major sources of misunderstanding that creates

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a significant impact on teacher agency is education policy. Unarguably, such impact cannot and must not be underestimated, as will be illustrated in the next section.

2.5 Education policy as an enabler of and a constraint on teacher agency

As has been touched upon on various occasions in the previous sections, education policy texts—those of language policy and language assessment policy included—do not always lend themselves to the promotion of teacher agency. Even though there are education policies that seek to promote teacher agency, there are also ones that seek to suppress it (Biesta et al., 2015). An instance of a controlling education policy can be found in a study by Feryok (2012). In her study, Feryok told of an Armenian English as a Foreign Language teacher working under a state-mandated English syllabus. While the syllabus stipulated clear goals for teachers to follow, its content was too limited and allowed little—if any—room for teachers to make adjustments that would suit their teaching contexts, such as accommodation for students' individual differences and learning styles (Feryok, 2012). Likewise, Campbell (2012) noted how education policy and teacher agency do not always go hand in hand, stating that "[t]he capacity of teachers to use professional discretion in their pedagogical and curricular practices exists, not always easily, alongside their accountability to the state, which generally maintains the overall authority for educational policy" (p. 183). Still another instance of education policy-teacher agency conflict was reported in Liyanage et al. (2015), where a language policy in China—called the New English Syllabus—attempted to promote teacher agency through reformed English teacher education, more research on and application of English language teaching theories in classroom practices, and encouragement for teachers' involvement in textbook selection and pedagogical innovation. However, with national qualifying examination still holding the key to the country's prestigious higher education institutions and employment, traditional teaching-to-the-test remains common practice, and the anticipated teacher agency is not—and cannot be—realized despite teachers being more equipped to achieve such agency (Liyanage et al., 2015).

The above three studies are but few examples of how education policy hinders teacher agency, regardless of its original intention, and this problematic situation has as well been reported in such other literature as Coffman (2015), Ollerhead (2010), Priestley et al. (2016), Robinson (2012), Van Huy and Hamid (2015), and Van Huy et al. (2016). Nonetheless, education policy is not always the bane of teacher agency. In their recent article, Biesta et al. (2015) stated that

> [t]here is an emerging tendency in curriculum policy in the UK and elsewhere to acknowledge the importance of teachers' agency…for the overall quality of education…The [re]turn to teacher agency not only gives explicit permission to teachers to exert high[er] degrees of professional agency within the context in which they work, but actually sees agency as an important dimension of teachers' professionalism. (pp. 624-625)

Policy texts notwithstanding, one key issue in teacher agency is that, despite the recent—or renewed—focus on teacher agency in education policy, this good intention does not always transpire in real practice (Liyanage et al., 2015; Priestley et al., 2015). This is because, also as discussed on several occasions in the sections afore, agency is dependent upon several interconnected and multi-layered factors. Under the context of education policy, these factors revolve around, first, the *structure* or the environment which is mostly governed by authorities; second, the *culture* which is partly shaped by these authorities and partly by the teachers themselves; and, third, the teachers' own *capacity* to be agentive in their own right (Priestley et al., 2015). Therefore, when analyzing for teacher agency, looking only at what the individuals can or cannot do does not suffice. All the aforementioned factors must be considered together, as their interaction is what shapes the ecology of the teachers' work context and exerts influences on the extent that teacher agency can be achieved. In the same vein, agency cannot be built by mandating it through policy texts. Once again, all related factors must work together to produce an ecology that is conducive to the cultivation of teacher agency (Priestley et al., 2015).

Thus, for teacher agency to be achieved and for the intended positive impact of education policy to be realized, it is imperative that the concept of teacher agency—particularly in relation to education policy—be more fully understood. Then and only then will the ecology bring about an alignment of policy rhetoric and professional reality and, consequently, the intended positive impact on education.

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2.6 Chapter summary

This chapter has touched upon five major topics relevant to the study. The first topic concerns matters relating to education policy—in particular, English language assessment policy—and discusses such emerging issues as “policy borrowing” and “policy dumping,” whereby local education system is impacted by education policy created by and intended for other countries, which is a situation that holds true to a certain extent in Thailand. The second topic of the chapter introduces the concept of human agency and its two key theoretical perspectives—individuals vs. structure perspective and ecological perspective. This then leads to the third topic, which zooms in on a specific type of human agency—agency of teachers, or teacher agency. The discussion on teacher agency attempts to explain what teacher agency is as well as what factors affect the extent to which teacher agency can be exercised and achieved. The discussion then moves to the fourth topic, focusing more specifically on current theory and research on teacher agency. Under this topic, six key issues related to teacher agency gleaned from recent literature are also brought forward. These six issues lead to the discussion on the fifth topic—education policy as an enabler of and a constraint on teacher agency—which in a way takes an even more specific look at teacher agency under a specific context, but in a sense also takes the consideration back to the issues presented in the first topic of this chapter. The chapter is now closing off with a chapter summary, and Table 1 summarizes the literature on human agency and teacher agency reviewed or mentioned in this chapter.

All five topics discussed in this chapter together highlight why it is important to investigate, document, and better understand teacher agency, in light of the shifting ecology of education created by, among several factors, education policy. This is precisely the key driver to this study, the detail of which will be presented in the next chapter.

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Table 1

Summary of literature on human agency and teacher agency

Study	Research context and participants	Methodology	Key findings
Biesta and Tedder (2006) and Biesta and Tedder (2007)	• Investigation of human agency in relation to learning in the life course • 2 adults, one living in southwest England and the other in an industrial village in England	Research design: • Longitudinal study of adult biographies Data collection: • One-to-one open-ended interview Data analysis: • Thematic, systematic, and longitudinal analysis	• Human agency is formed through combination of reflection of the past, projection on the future, and decision about the present action • Level of achievement of human agency depends on one's orientation toward the situation (through consideration on past, future, and present) and available resources (economic, social, and cultural)
Ollerhead (2010)	• Investigation of teacher agency in relation to the Language, Literacy, and Numeracy Program policy in Australia • College head teacher and 2 teachers in adult English as a Second Language program in vocational college	Research design: • Multi-site case study Data collection: • Classroom observation • One-to-one interview Data analysis: • Method not stated	• Teachers' past experience and personal beliefs lead to different perception on policy demands and consequently different levels of achievement of teacher agency
Feryok (2012)	• Investigation of development of teacher agency in English language teachers in Armenia • 6 teachers studying in post-graduate Teaching English as a Foreign Language program	Research design: • Descriptive case study • Iterative qualitative research design Data collection: • Classroom observation • One-to-one semi-structured interview • E-mail interview Data analysis: • Content analysis based on grounded theory and constant comparison	• Development of teacher agency is influenced by past experience, beliefs, social contexts, and available resources • Teacher agency is "transformative" in that it can affect the social context and actions of other individuals in such context • Despite contextual constraints, teachers can still develop agency and act as agents of change

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Study	Research context and participants	Methodology	Key findings
Priestley et al. (2012)	• Investigation of teacher agency in schools under the curriculum of Scottish Qualifications Authority in Scotland • 7 teachers and (unstated number of) students in secondary school and further education college	Research design: • Descriptive, empirical case study Data collection: • Curriculum text analysis • Classroom observation • One-to-one interview (teachers) • Focus group interview (students) Data analysis: • Thematic analysis based on ecological perspective of agency	• Students' exam results translate to evaluation of teachers and schools, thus teachers are forced to teach "by the book" even though doing so means going against their pedagogical beliefs • Experience from former career outside of teaching profession enables teachers to find ways to achieve agency • Teacher agency is inhibited by certain aspects of the ecology, yet it is still achieved through other aspects of the same ecology
Robinson (2012)	• Investigation of teacher agency in relation to education policy reform in Australia • School principal and 11 teachers in non-government primary school	Research design: • Ethnographic study Data collection: • Participant observation • One-to-one semi-structured interview • Informal conversation Data analysis: • Method not stated	• Teachers are frustrated with the policy reform due to conflict between policy requirement and school culture and personal philosophy • Teachers maintain enthusiasm through one another's support and close relationship with students • Teacher agency is exhibited through teachers complying with certain policy aspects while working around some to maintain school and personal status quo
Biesta et al. (2015) and Priestley et al. (2015)	• Investigation of beliefs and teacher agency in light of education reform in Scotland (Scotland's Curriculum for Excellence) • Senior managers and 6 teachers in one primary school and two secondary schools	Research design: • Ethnographic study • Iterative design Data collection: • Policy text analysis • Classroom observation • One-to-one semi-structured interview • Focus group interview • Teacher network mapping Data analysis: • Thematic analysis based on pre-set codes • Open-coding analysis	• Teachers' beliefs and values are not in line with institutional discourse and culture under reform • Teachers are confused about their roles and lack clear vision of education, hence focus only on the "here-and-now" of the situation • Possibility of teachers utilizing their beliefs and values to achieve teacher agency under new policy is thus limited

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Study	Research context and participants	Methodology	Key findings
Ruohotie-Lyhty (2015a)	• Investigation of development of beliefs of newly qualified foreign language teachers in Finland • Phase 1: 23 student teachers • Phase 2: 11 novice teachers (from Phase 1)	Research design: • Contextual and discursive study Data collection: • Reflective essay • One-to-one interview Data analysis: • Discourse analysis	• How teachers construct themselves as they perceive and navigate through new environment affects their beliefs and consequently their agency • At the same time, teachers' beliefs and agency also affect how they perceive the environment, in turn affecting how they construct themselves as they progress through their career
Liyanage et al. (2015)	• Investigation of teacher agency in relation to English curriculum reform in Inner Mongolia (China's New English Syllabus) • 8 English language teachers in secondary schools and colleges	Research design: • Design not stated Data collection: • One-to-one interview Data analysis: • Inductive analysis based on grounded theory	• New policy encourages teacher agency through increased teacher involvement in curriculum development and use of communicative pedagogical approaches • National qualifying examination and expectation from students and parents force teachers to maintain traditional teach-to-the-test methods • Despite being directly encouraged by new policy, teacher agency is compromised
Van Huy and Hamid (2015) and Van Huy et al. (2016)	• Investigation of teacher agency in relation to CEFR-based English language education policy in Vietnam (Vietnam's Project 2020) • 21 participants (school administrators, English language teachers, and students) in public university	Research design: • Ethnographic study • Qualitative case study Data collection: • Policy text analysis • Classroom observation • One-to-one in-depth interview Data analysis: • Content analysis based on Krippendorff's (2013) hermeneutic loop	• Teachers and students are caught unprepared and confused by abrupt policy enactment • Teachers express conflict between personal beliefs and policy mandate • Teacher agency is exhibited in forms of "coping strategies" such as adjustment of test items to accommodate students' graduation • Policy intention does not take form

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CHAPTER III
RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Context of the study

The context of the study is fundamentally the context in which teachers operate in their everyday work. Three main facets of such context are policy context, institutional context, and classroom context, and each facet includes both physical and non-physical elements encountered by teachers. The following sections will describe these three facets and their elements in more detail.

3.1.1 Policy context

The policy in focus of this study is the National Education Plan B.E. 2560–2579 (2017–2036 C.E.) published by the Office of the Education Council (OEC), Ministry of Education. As discussed in Chapter 2, this national education policy recommends that Thai graduates of junior secondary education, senior secondary education, and higher education reach a certain level of English proficiency, and that such level of English proficiency be measured against the six CEFR levels (Office of the Education Council, 2017, pp. 84, 155, 163). Table 2 summarizes the English proficiency level desired of Thai graduates of junior secondary education, senior secondary education, and higher education, stated in terms of the CEFR levels.

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Table 2

The English proficiency level desired of Thai graduates of junior secondary education, senior secondary education, and higher education stipulated in the National Education Plan B.E. 2560–2579 (2017–2036 C.E.)

	Desired English proficiency level by target period (C.E.)			
Education level	2017–2021	2022–2026	2027–2031	2032–2036
Junior secondary	A1	A2	B1	B2
Senior secondary	A2	B1	B1+	B2
Higher education	B2	B2+	C1	C1+

The National Education Plan is an overarching policy governing education of all levels in Thailand; therefore, it is not feasible for this study to be based on such broad policy texts. As will be discussed in more detail in later sections, the scope of this study aims at investigating agency of English teachers in higher education institutions (henceforth "English teachers"). Thus, the national education policy texts central to the study are scoped to those from the National Education Plan that constitute the English language assessment policy for higher education and those from a recent policy specifically stipulated to upgrade English proficiency standards of higher education graduates. The latter policy was created and announced in early 2016 by the Office of the Higher Education Commission (OHEC)[4], an office under the Ministry of Education that oversees all public and private higher education institutions in Thailand. The texts of this policy consist of, among other things, five clauses that require all higher education institutions to set institutional goal and action plan—which include, but are not limited to, adjustment of English language curriculum and development of extracurricular activities—that will lead to an environment that is conducive to learning and using English and, eventually, to improving students' English proficiency (Office of the Higher Education Commission, 2016). The last clause of this policy is particularly relevant to this study, as it essentially acts as an English language assessment policy for higher education. This clause states that higher education institutions are strongly encouraged to assess English proficiency of all graduating students. Such assessment could be done using an English proficiency test that is either institutionally-owned or externally-developed, but the results from the test must be equated with the CEFR or other similar language standards. This signifies that such clause is not merely an English language assessment policy but an English language assessment policy with an aspect of policy borrowing integrated into its intent. An excerpt of the National Education Plan—the sections that pertain to the study—and the five clauses of the policy to upgrade English proficiency standards of higher education graduates are presented in Appendix A (original Thai text) and Appendix B (translated English text).

[4] Name and affiliation at the time of study—currently the Ministry of Higher Education, Science, Research and Innovation.

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3.1.2 Institutional context

According to an official report published by the OHEC for 2016 academic year, there are two main types of higher education institutions in Thailand—public institutions and private institutions—and several sub-types within each, as detailed in Table 3 (Office of the Higher Education Commission, 2017). Higher education institutions operating under the OHEC at the time of the study thus constituted the institutional context—and scope—of this study. Data were gathered from as many types of higher education institutions as possible, so as to obtain a broad spectrum of perspectives on the work and life—hence agency—of English teachers of various backgrounds, working in various institutional environments.

3.1.3 Classroom context

As stated in Chapter 1, this study aims at investigating agency of English language teachers teaching compulsory English course(s) in higher education institutions in Thailand (more detail of participants of the study will be presented below). However, even within such a defined scope, it is to be expected that these teachers—even those who work in the same institution—may not be teaching under the same classroom

Table 3

Higher education institution types in Thailand

Main types	Sub-types
1. Public institution	1.1 State university (มหาวิทยาลัยของรัฐ)
	1.2 Rajamangala University of Technology system (มหาวิทยาลัยเทคโนโลยีราชมงคล)
	1.3 Autonomous state university (มหาวิทยาลัยในกำกับของรัฐ)
	1.4 Open university (มหาวิทยาลัยรัฐไม่จำกัดรับ)
	1.5 Rajabhat University system (มหาวิทยาลัยราชภัฏ)
2. Private institution	2.1 Private university (มหาวิทยาลัยเอกชน)
	2.2 Private college (วิทยาลัยเอกชน)
	2.3 Private institute (สถาบันอุดมศึกษาเอกชน)

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context. The variation of classroom context faced by these teachers depends largely upon—but is definitely not limited to—the physical environment of their classroom, the English course that they teach, the resources and materials available to them, as well as the number, English proficiency level, and affective state (e.g., attitude toward learning English) of their students. While it could be argued that controlling for similar classroom context among participants would yield a more reliable research data, the researcher deemed that gathering data from English teachers working under various contexts could also yield valuable insights as to how different classroom contexts could affect—and effect—the achievement of teacher agency differently. Thus, classroom context was one among the units of analysis of this study and, for that reason, was investigated and analyzed as one among a number of elements that contributes to teacher agency.

3.2 Participants

3.2.1 Participant selection scheme

Participants of this study comprise 63 teachers of diverse nationalities teaching compulsory English course(s) in higher education institutions—both public and private—in Thailand. The criterion for selecting and grouping participants' nationalities is based on Braj Kachru's three concentric circles (Kachru, 1989). The rationale for using such criterion is so that this study includes English teachers from all types of English language culture and usage background—that is, native (English as first language) speakers from the Inner Circle background, English as a Second Language speakers from the Outer Circle background, and English as a Foreign Language speakers from the Expanding Circle background (Kachru, 1989)—and hence encompasses a more comprehensive understanding of English teachers currently teaching in Thailand.

The detail of the nationality(ies) included within each of Kachru's (1989) circles can be further elaborated as follows: According to Kachru (1989), the Inner Circle includes such countries as the United Kingdom, the United States, Canada, Australia, and New Zealand, while the Outer Circle includes such countries as India, Malaysia, the Philippines, Singapore, and others in which English has become the country's official language as remnants of their post-colonial era. For participants in

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the Inner Circle and the Outer Circle groups, the researcher recruited English teachers of various nationalities based on Kachru’s (1989) framework. With regard to participants in the Expanding Circle group, however, the nationality most pertinent to this study is Thai, hence only Thai-nationality English teachers were recruited into the Expanding Circle group.

3.2.2 Sampling method

The participants in this study were recruited using purposive sampling so as to ensure that they possess the characteristics and knowledge which are relevant to the study. Also, in order to maintain such requirement throughout the participant recruitment process, the snowball sampling technique was used (Creswell, 2014).

In terms of participant categorization and number of participants in each category, the researcher recruited 63 English teachers of various nationalities based on Braj Kachru’s framework, as discussed in the above section, and for each circle included teachers from both public institutions and private institutions. A framework for participant categorization, along with the number of participants of each circle in each institution type, is illustrated in Figure 1.

It must be noted that the purpose of including participants of various nationalities and institutional affiliations was so that the sample pool would reflect the population reality of English teachers in Thailand’s higher education institutions. It was neither the intention nor within the scope of this study to compare and contrast participants across groups.

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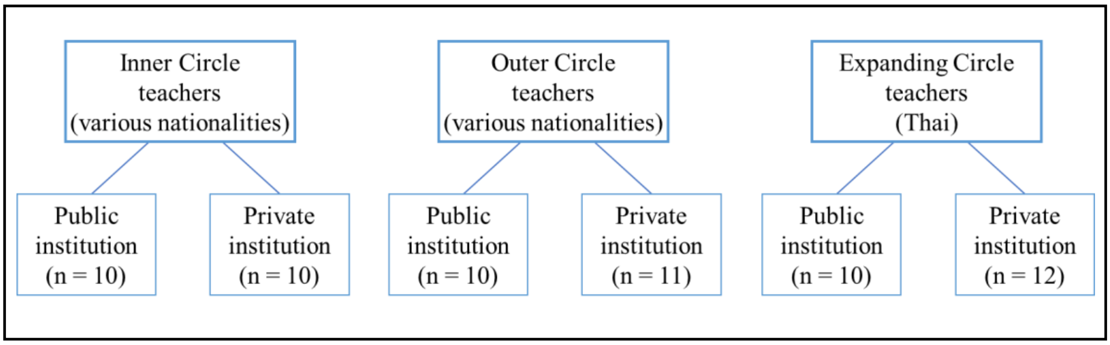
Figure 1

Framework for participant categorization (n = 63)



3.2.3 Participant profile

Before presenting the profile of the participants, the researcher would like to point out that, in the context of Thailand's higher education system, there are no centralized rules or regulations with regard to the recruitment criteria of English teachers. Each higher education institution can independently set its own applicant qualifications. Nonetheless, similarities exist. For example, the recruitment criteria generally require that the applicants hold an education degree or a certificate in English or related fields and that qualified applicants pass both an interview and a teaching demonstration before the employment decision is made. As it is beyond the scope of this study to delve into the recruitment details of each and every higher education institution in Thailand, the participant profile presented below is reflective of the recruitment criteria set by the institutions by which the participants are employed.

The profile of the 63 English teachers who participated in this study is as follows: Of the 63 teachers, 36 (57%) are male, 27 (43%) are female. The majority of the participants (n = 43, 68%) are in the age group of 40–49. Table 4 provides more detail on the number of participating teachers in each age group.

Table 4

Participants' age group (n = 63)

Age group	n	%	Age group	n	%
20–23	1	2	40–43	14	22
24–26	0	0	44–46	6	10
27–29	1	2	47–49	7	11
30–33	8	13	50–53	7	11
34–36	6	10	54–56	1	2
37–39	6	10	57–59	4	6
			60 or over	2	3

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In terms of nationality, there are roughly the same number of participants in each of the three concentric circles (Kachru, 1989)—20 teachers (32%) from the Inner Circle countries, 21 teachers (33%) from the Outer Circle countries, and 22 teachers (35%) from the Expanding Circle country. Table 5 details home countries of participating teachers in each circle.

As for education (highest level obtained), 35 teachers (56%) hold a master's degree, 17 (27%) a doctoral degree, and 11 (17%) a bachelor's degree. A little over half of the teachers (n = 35, 56%) never studied outside their home country. Those who did (n = 28, 44%) spent an average of 2.33 years abroad (minimum = 0.08 years, maximum = 10 years). These comprise both Thai teachers studying outside of Thailand and foreign teachers studying either in Thailand or elsewhere besides their home country. Table 6 lists the countries in which participating teachers had study abroad experience. Note that multiple responses are possible.

As for field of study, the majority of the participants (a total of 86 responses, multiple responses possible) have expertise in English language or language-related areas, such as linguistics, language instruction, and language assessment and evaluation. A few participants (a total of nine responses, multiple responses possible) have expertise in other areas, such as anthropology, archeology, art education, business communication, mass communication, nursing, and political science. Table 7 shows a cross-tabulation of participating teachers' degree type and field of study.

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Table 5

Participants' nationality (home country)

Inner Circle		Outer Circle		Expanding Circle	
Home country	n	Home country	n	Home country	n
The United Kingdom	9	The Philippines	19	Thailand	22
The United States	8	India	1		
Australia	1	Sri Lanka	1		
Canada	1				
Ireland	1				
Total	20	Total	21	Total	22

Table 6

Countries where participants had study abroad experience

Country	n	Country	n	Country	n
Thailand	12	Canada	1	South Africa	1
The United Kingdom	5	Germany	1	South Korea	1
Australia	4	India	1	Spain	1
The United States	3	Japan	1	Sweden	1
Malaysia	2	Singapore	1	Zambia	1

Note. Multiple responses possible.

Table 7

Participants' education degree type and field of study

	English or education-related field	Non-English- or non-education-related field	Other or unspecified field	
Degree type	n	n	n	Total
Doctoral degree	3		1	4
Master's degree	9	1	2	12
Bachelor's degree		2	2	4
Certificate / Diploma	4	1	2	7
Seminar / Workshop			1	1
Unspecified degree type	4	4		8
Total	20	8	8	36

Note. Multiple responses possible.

When asked about work experience, 36 participants (57%) reported having worked in non-education field(s) before they changed their career to teaching. Even though the number of years spent working in non-education field(s) was asked in the questionnaire survey, the minimum, maximum, mean, and total number of years could not be calculated because some teachers worked in multiple fields or held multiple

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positions at the same time. Table 8 lists the fields in which participating teachers had worked before coming into education.

As for teaching experience, over half of the participants (n = 38, 60%) never taught any subject other than English, while the rest (n = 25, 40%) had previously taught subjects other than English, the majority of which were related to the subject area of their degree of study, such as business, communication arts, history, hospitality, nursing, and social studies. For the total pool of participants (n = 63), the number of years in English language teaching experience is averaged at 15.06 years (minimum = 2 years, maximum = 34 years), and the number of years in English language teaching experience specifically in Thailand is averaged at 12.88 years (minimum = 2 years, maximum = 34 years), indicating that the participants' English language teaching experience mostly takes place in Thailand.

At the time of the study, all 63 participating teachers were teaching undergraduate-level English courses in higher education institutions. Thirty teachers (48%) were teaching in public institutions (a total of 10 institutions) and 33 teachers (52%) in private institutions (a total of 12 institutions). Besides teaching, quite a few teachers reported holding some form of administrative role, as demonstrated in Table 9. Note that multiple responses are possible.

All 63 participants profiled above responded to the questionnaire survey, and 51 (81%) agreed to take part in a follow-up semi-structured interview, either in a focus group format or in a one-to-one format. Of the 51 interviews, the researcher then selected 26 (51%) to report in this dissertation. The selection was made based on completeness of the interview and relevance of the response—as some interview sessions were cut short or some teachers were not willing to answer certain questions. The researcher also took into consideration the variety of institution types and nationality of teachers and tried her best to be as comprehensive as possible so as to reduce bias in the results. Thus, the qualitative findings reported in this dissertation were gleaned from 26 selected interviews, comprising responses from eight Inner Circle teachers, nine Outer Circle teachers, and nine Expanding Circle teachers, and representing nine public institutions and nine private institutions. Table 10 shows the profile of the 26 participating teachers whose interviews are reported in this dissertation.

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Table 8

Participants' field of work before coming into education

Field	n	Field	n	Field	n
Business	10	British Council	1	Food service	1
Banking / Finance	4	Call center	1	Music	1
Hospitality	4	Christian missionary	1	NGO	1
Information technology	4	Communication arts	1	Technical writing	1
Medicine	3	Counseling	1	Training	1
Biology / Environmental science	2	Embassy	1	Translation	1
Legal	2	Engineering	1		

Note. Multiple responses possible.

Table 9

Participants' administrative role or position in their respective higher education institution

Administrative role or position	n
Teacher / Lecturer	62
Policy implementer	6
Policy administrator	4
Administrative or management position (e.g., head of department)	3
Course coordinator	3
Academic committee member	2
Policy maker	2
Researcher	1

Note. Multiple responses possible.

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Table 10

Profile of selected interview participants (n = 26)

Name	Gender	Age group	Education degree	Prior non-education experience	Total teaching experience (years)	Teaching experience in Thailand (years)
Inner Circle teachers from pubic institution (n = 4)						
Albert	Male	34–36	Master's	Yes	12	10
Henry	Male	47–49	Doctorate	No	18	17
Mathias	Male	40–43	Master's	Yes	15	8
Seth	Male	44–46	Bachelor's	Yes	7	7
Inner Circle teachers from private institution (n = 4)						
Anton	Male	57–59	Master's	Yes	18	18
Mitch	Male	50–53	Doctorate	No	21	3.5
Nigel	Male	57–59	Bachelor's	Yes	18	17.5
Timothy	Male	50–53	Master's	Yes	25	12
Outer Circle teachers from pubic institution (n = 4)						
Marcy	Female	54–56	Master's	No	15	10
Miranda	Female	20–23	Bachelor's	No	3	3
Suresh	Male	57–59	Doctorate	No	30	7
Zenith	Male	40–43	Bachelor's	Yes	15	15
Outer Circle teachers from private institution (n = 5)						
Albedo	Male	34–36	Master's	Yes	14	13
Adrian	Male	47–49	Doctorate	Yes	23	23
Dana	Female	40–43	Master's	No	10	5
Giselle	Female	47–49	Doctorate	No	27	16
Greg	Male	47–49	Master's	No	21	18

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Name	Gender	Age group	Education degree	Prior non-education experience	Total teaching experience (years)	Teaching experience in Thailand (years)
Expanding Circle teachers from pubic institution (n = 5)						
Fasai	Female	40–43	Doctorate	Yes	12	12
Ganda	Female	50–53	Doctorate	Yes	20	20
Jate	Male	30–33	Doctorate	Yes	9	9
Jitti	Male	34–36	Doctorate	No	10	10
Orapan	Female	37–39	Doctorate	No	12	12
Expanding Circle teachers from private institution (n = 4)						
Apinya	Female	47–49	Doctorate	Yes	13	13
Kasem	Male	40–43	Master’s	Yes	18	18
Lalipa	Female	30–33	Master’s	Yes	5	5
Wattana	Male	27–29	Master’s	No	4	4

Note. All names are pseudonyms. Participants are identified by circle and institution type only.

3.3 Research framework

3.3.1 Research design

To understand human agency, regardless of the discipline in which it is studied, researchers need to tap into intangible, and at times unconscious, aspects of individuals such as perception, belief, emotion, judgment, and identity. Understanding teacher agency is no exception. Therefore, a number of previous studies on human agency and teacher agency employ qualitative research methods to obtain detailed insights and gain in-depth understanding of this phenomenon, using such instruments as observation, focus group interview, one-to-one interview, and journal entry, to name a few (Barkhuizen, 2016; Biesta et al., 2015; Feryok, 2012; Fitzpatrick, 2011; Liyanage et al., 2015; Priestley et al., 2015; Ruohotie-Lyhty, 2015a, 2015b). However, it is worth noting that, while qualitative methods enable researchers to acquire depth of information, the resources required to conduct this type of research may not make it possible for researches to collect data from a breadth of subjects.

Illustrative of this can be seen from the fact that all of the aforementioned studies employing qualitative methods were conducted on a small number of participants, generally not over 20, and mostly fewer than 10 (see also Table 1 at the end of Chapter 2). This drawback of qualitative methodology is also noted by Day, Sammons, and Gu (2008) in that "much qualitative research…is either too fine grained and small-scale to be generalizable or else focuses on only one aspect while excluding others" (p. 331).

Besides the issue of depth versus breadth of collected data, a number of researchers—though of different periods—have similarly pointed out a caveat against employing a single methodology in a study. In the third edition of *Handbook of Research on Teaching* published in 1986, Shulman discussed the notion of research paradigm and how a particular paradigm "grows out of a particular perspective, a bias of either convention or discipline, necessarily illuminating some part of the field of teaching while ignoring the rest" (p. 4) and warned of the "potential corruption (or worse, trivialization) by [employing] a single paradigmatic view" in a study (p. 4). What Shulman saw as "healthy" research would be one that utilizes a "proper blending" of methodologies and makes inquiries on "a wide range of determinants influencing teaching practice and its consequences" (Shulman, 1986, pp. 4, 6). Shulman's (1986) view was echoed by Gage (1989), who presented issues resulting from "Paradigm Wars" and provided a prognosis for research in teaching of the next decade. In his article, Gage discussed how research based on a single perspective—either purely qualitatively gathering insights in search for conceptual meaning or solely quantitatively measuring variables by the numbers—could derive narrow-minded results (Gage, 1989). He, instead, argued that "paradigm differences do not require paradigm conflict" and that

> nothing about objective-quantitative research precluded the description and analysis of classroom processes with interpretive-qualitative methods…most of these investigations with both kinds of methods turned out to be more fruitful of insights, understanding, predictive power, and control resulting in improvements of teaching. (Gage, 1989, p. 7)

Two decades later, the sentiment of Shulman (1986) and Gage (1989) was brought up once more by Day et al. (2008), who restated earlier discussions made by the former

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researchers with regard to the Paradigm Wars and the bias that could result if only one paradigm was used. Day et al. (2008), thus, made a case in favor of "conceptual and methodological integration," combining qualitative and quantitative research methods to arrive at "synergistic understandings that enabled the discovery and delineation of key findings that were both more enlightening and more robust than would have been the case if one method or another had dominated" (p. 331).

Following the arguments made by researchers mentioned in the above paragraphs, the research design of this study is therefore descriptive in nature yet incorporates both qualitative and quantitative methods, where qualitative research instruments yielding in-depth information and quantitative research instrument yielding broad-scope information complement—and triangulate—one another.

In terms of how qualitative and quantitative research instruments could together be operationalized in a single study, Dörnyei (2007) and Creswell (2014) offered several suggestions on possible methodological combinations. After reviewing for a viable combination, the researcher believed that what would be most suitable for this study is what Dörnyei (2007) called the "concurrent combinations of qualitative and quantitative research" (p. 172) and Creswell (2014) called the "convergent parallel design" (p. 570). Although different in technical terminology, the two terms refer to a similar—if not in fact the same—research design. That is, despite being run concurrently within the same study, qualitative methodology and quantitative methodology are operationalized independently of each other. Data from each methodology are collected and analyzed separately before they are brought together for comparison or association. The integrated data then informs data interpretation and research findings. Figure 2 illustrates this research design—note that, to avoid confusion, the term "concurrent combinations of qualitative and quantitative research" given by Dörnyei (2007) will be used hereafter.

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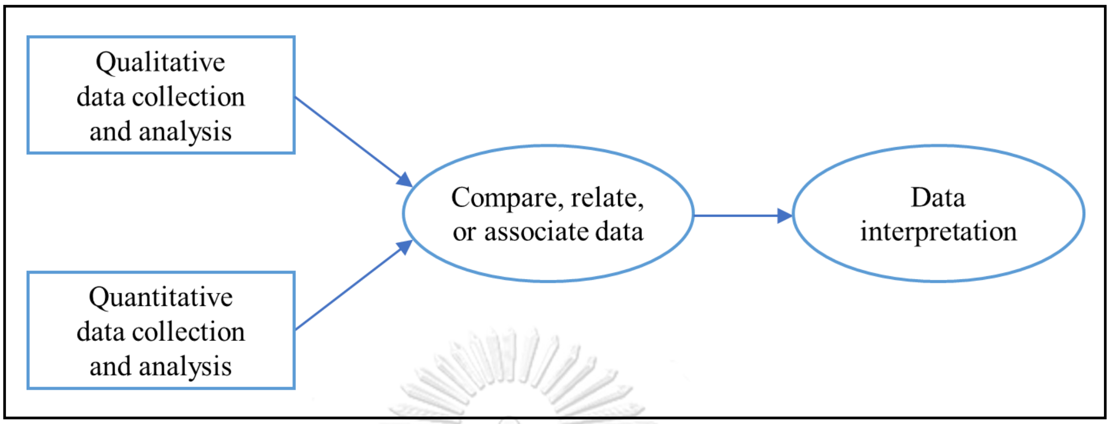
Dörnyei (2007) stated that the benefit of this research design is that it helps "broaden the research perspective and thus provide a general picture or to test how the different findings complement or corroborate each other" and that it is "invaluable when [researchers] examine a phenomenon that has several levels…[and] useful for combining micro and macro perspectives [of the phenomenon under investigation]"

Figure 2

Concurrent combinations of qualitative and quantitative research design



Note. Figure adapted from Creswell (2014).

(pp. 172-173). Creswell (2014) also noted the advantage of this research design, in that "one data collection form supplies strengths to offset the weaknesses of the other form, and that a more complete understanding of a research problem results from collecting both quantitative and qualitative data" (p. 570).

The researcher believed that this research design was appropriate for this study for two main reasons. First, as mentioned earlier in the section, research on teacher agency has been predominantly qualitative-based. So, in this study, supplementing qualitative methodology with a quantitative-oriented one would, it was hoped, set exemplary contribution to research in this field. Second, this research design would allow the researcher to analyze the data both separately and, later in the process, in an integrative manner, so as to bring about thorough data interpretation and, consequently, research findings. Table 11 summarizes the study's research design, along with its research phases and implementation steps.

That said, two other matters must also be noted. The first matter relates to the simultaneousness of the actual research operation. Due to the limitation in human resource and in participants' availability, the three research instruments of the study—that is, questionnaire survey, focus group interview, and semi-structured one-to-one interview—were not operationalized all at once, hence not exactly a "concurrent" design in the strict sense of the term. However, the three instruments were

Table 11

Research design, research phases, and implementation steps

Research phases	Implementation steps
Phase 1: Background studies	1. Reviewed literature on human agency, teacher agency, and education/language/language assessment policy 2. Analyzed relevant education policy documents imposed on Thai higher education institutions • The National Education Plan B.E. 2560–2579 (2017–2036 C.E.) • The policy to upgrade English proficiency standards of higher education graduates B.E. 2559 (2016 C.E.)

Phase 2: Data collection and analysis	1. Collected quantitative and qualitative data concurrently using three research instruments
	• Quantitative: Questionnaire survey
	• Qualitative: Focus group interview
	• Qualitative: Semi-structured one-to-one interview
	2. Analyzed collected data independently by instrument
	• Quantitative data:
	  • Statistical analysis (descriptive statistics)
	• Qualitative data:
	  • Transcription and validation of transcribed data (for focus group interview and semi-structured one-to-one interview)
	  • Coding and validation of coded data
	  • Analysis of data for emerging or common themes

Phase 3: Data comparison and/or association	1. Compared all analyzed data from Phase 2 to find any convergence, divergence, or association 2. Related analyzed data from Phase 2 to information from literature review and document analysis in Phase 1
Phase 4: Data interpretation	1. Interpreted data with respect to research questions and research objectives 2. Compiled interpreted data to arrive at research findings

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operationalized within a relatively close time frame and did not constitute distinct research phases. The second matter has to do with the weight the researcher put into each method as well as what information was collected by each instrument. As this study is primarily descriptive, qualitative method dominates. Yet, in order to make comparison or association of data from all three research instruments, the researcher believed that each instrument needed to gather information that addressed the same (i.e., all) research questions, albeit to a different extent. That is, some research questions were primary in one particular instrument but secondary in other instruments. Further discussion on the research instruments and the data collection focus of each instrument will be presented in the later section.

3.3.2 Conceptual framework

The conceptual framework of this study takes into account the interconnection between the major factor—i.e., English language assessment policy—and the major variable, along with its sub-variables—i.e., agency of English teachers (henceforth "teacher agency") and the three agentic dimensions—as suggested in the ecological perspective to human agency proposed by Emirbayer and Mische (1998) and Priestley et al. (2015). A visual representation of such interconnection is shown in Figure 3[5].

As illustrated in Figure 3, English language assessment policy and teacher agency are represented by the white boxes, and the three agentic dimensions—the iterational dimension, the projective dimension, and the practical-evaluative dimension—are represented by the shaded boxes enclosed in an oval. The solid-line arrows show the direction of influence from English language assessment policy to the three agentic dimensions, and from the three agentic dimensions to teacher agency. The dotted-line triangle shows the interplay among the three agentic dimensions operating within the structural and temporal contexts—that is, within the ecology—and, as represented by the solid-line arrows jutting out from the oval, the result of this interplay also influences teacher agency. Together, this visual representation of the conceptual framework illustrates how English language assessment policy exerts influence on the interplay of the three agentic dimensions under certain structural and temporal circumstances. This process, in turn, exerts influence on how teacher agency is exhibited within such circumstances.

This study also bases its theoretical framework regarding the approach to analyzing human agency on the works of Emirbayer and Mische (1998) and Priestley et al. (2015). As discussed in the literature review chapter, the fact that Emirbayer and Mische (1998) view agency as a process, not a product, and seek to understand it in

[5] The figure first appeared in an article published in *rEFLections*, Volume 28, Number 2, May–August, 2021 (Dhammarungruang & Wudthayagorn, 2021).

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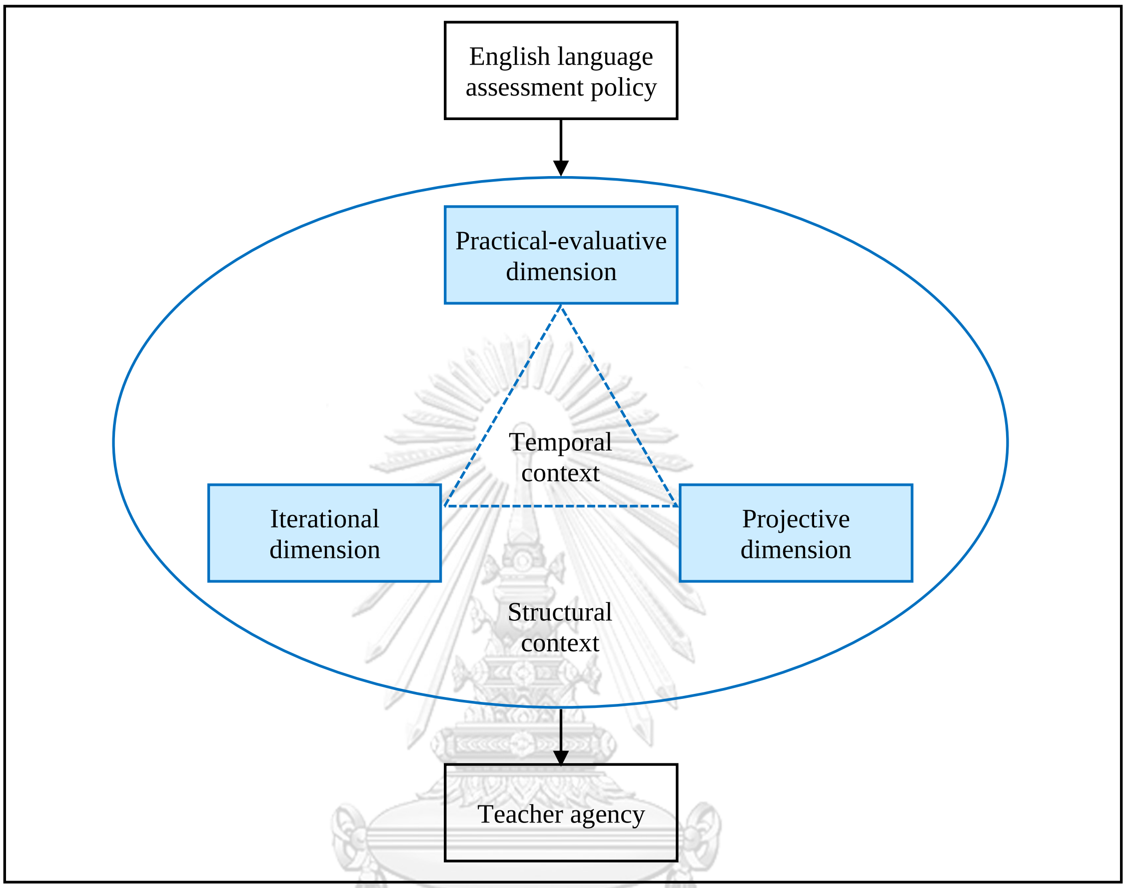
Figure 3

Conceptual framework of the study



relation to both structural and temporal contexts allows for an investigation into how agency is achieved in certain settings, as opposed to a study that merely seeks to theorize the origin of agency. Recent researchers on teacher agency find this view particularly useful because the goal of studying teacher agency is not to explain the origin of teachers' social action but to understand "the phenomenon of [teacher] agency itself and…how [teacher] agency is achieved in concrete settings and in and through particular ecological conditions and circumstances" (Biesta et al., 2015, p. 626; Priestley et al., 2016; Priestley et al., 2015). Thus, based on the rationale and advocacy put forth by Biesta et al. (2015), Priestley et al. (2016), and Priestley et al. (2015), among other teacher agency researchers, this study adopted the ecological approach to analyzing human agency proposed by Emirbayer and Mische (1998) and followed Priestley et al. (2015) as to how the ecological approach is operationalized in teacher agency research. The framework of Emirbayer and Mische (1998) and the recommendation from Priestley et al. (2015) then served as the theoretical framework for this study in investigating the influence of English language assessment policy on agency of English teachers.

3.4 Research instruments

3.4.1 Research instruments and rationale for use

This study employs three research instruments, which are questionnaire survey, focus group interview, and semi-structured one-to-one interview. The purpose of using these three instruments is twofold. First and foremost, they serve as triangulation of data sources, data types, and data collection methods, which, according to Creswell (2014), is a critical process to "[ensure] that the study will be accurate because the information draws on multiple sources of information, individuals, or processes. In this way, it encourages the researcher to develop a report that is both accurate and credible" (p. 283). Second, the different instruments help the researcher obtain both descriptive and in-depth data that can be analyzed qualitatively (e.g., data from focus group interview and semi-structured one-to-one interview) and numerical-oriented data that can be analyzed quantitatively (e.g., data from questionnaire survey), the latter of which, as previously mentioned, is a type of data not commonly gathered in research on teacher agency. This is also in keeping with the recommendation of Shulman (1986), Gage (1989), and Day et al. (2008) discussed in the above section—that a study should not rely solely on a single methodology, *either* qualitative *or* quantitative, else the researcher of that study could miss important insights. Thus, for this study, the researcher deemed that questionnaire survey, focus group interview, and semi-structured one-to-one interview would complement one another in the triangulation process and aid in the comprehensiveness of data collected. Table 12 presents the research instruments of the study and denotes primary and secondary instrument(s) used for the investigation of each research question.

Following the research design described and illustrated in the above section, data collection of this study commenced with collecting quantitative data through questionnaire survey. The primary focus was to obtain data to answer research

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Table 12

Research instruments used for investigation of each research question

Research questions	Instruments used for investigation	
	Primary instrument(s)	Secondary instrument(s)
Research question 1: How do English teachers understand the English language assessment policy imposed on their institution, and what is their interpretation of such policy?	Questionnaire survey	Focus group interview; Semi-structured one-to-one interview
Research question 2: How do English teachers achieve agency in the classroom context, in light of the English language assessment policy?	Focus group interview; Semi-structured one-to-one interview	Questionnaire survey
Research question 3: How is agency of English teachers influenced by the English language assessment policy?	Focus group interview; Semi-structured one-to-one interview	Questionnaire survey

Table 13

Number of participants for each instrument

Circle	Instrument	Public institution	Private institution
Inner Circle	Questionnaire survey	10	10
(n = 20)	Focus group interview	0	0
	One-to-one interview	8	8
Outer Circle	Questionnaire survey	10	11
(n = 21)	Focus group interview	2	2
	One-to-one interview	7	6
Expanding Circle	Questionnaire survey	10	12
(n = 22)	Focus group interview	4	0
	One-to-one interview	6	8

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question 1, but some questionnaire items also gauged insights into research questions 2 and 3 as secondary focus. A "side benefit" of administering the questionnaire survey first was that the researcher could use it as a means to recruit participants for the qualitative portion of the study (Dörnyei, 2007). This was done by including a request on the last page of the questionnaire survey, asking the respondents whether they would be interested in participating in focus group interview or semi-structured one-to-one interview that would follow, and to leave their contact information if they would be willing to take part. Indeed, of the 63 participants who responded to the questionnaire survey, 51 agreed to take part further in the interview—43 as semi-structured one-to-one interview and eight as focus group interview—as illustrated in Table 13. Data collection for the qualitative portion of the study then proceeded accordingly. Note that the format (focus group vs. one-to-one), date, and location of the interview were based upon participants' preference and availability.

Further detail on the data collection procedure will be discussed in the later section of this chapter. To maintain focus on research instruments, the following two sections thus present topics related to the development of the research instruments used in the study.

3.4.2 Model for instrument development

The content of each instrument—namely, items in the questionnaire survey and topics in the focus group interview and the semi-structured one-to-one interview—was developed based on the model for analyzing teacher agency proposed by Pantić (2015). The development process of this model involved the author's working with an Advisory Committee of 12 experts of various stake-holding levels in Scotland's education system—comprising national and local policy makers, researchers of teacher agency, teacher educators, and the teachers themselves, some of whom were also responsible for administrative functions in their schools. The author also drew upon her own research on teacher agency, which was based on "social theories of human agency within social structures and cultures" of Giddens's (1984) theory of structuration and Archer's (2000) relational theory of agency (Pantić, 2015, p. 759). The product of the experts' opinion in combination with the author's empirical

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research was a model that could be used to study teacher agency in culturally- and socially-diverse educational environment (Pantić, 2015).

Similar to what Shulman (1986), Gage (1989), and Day et al. (2008) recommended, the Advisory Committee who worked with Pantić (2015) advised employing both qualitative and quantitative methods in data collection in order to "capture the complexity of context-embedded agency" (Pantić, 2015, p. 765), which Pantić (2015) fully acknowledged. Besides the recommendation on an integrative research method, Pantić's (2015) model for analyzing teacher agency also depicts four major units of analysis and their associate elements, as follows:

1. Sense of purpose

Pantić (2015) cited Archer (2000) who suggested that "agents need to find the reasons embedded in a role sufficiently good to make them their own" (p. 766). Teachers' understanding of their role, both inside and outside of the classroom, as well as their motivation for working in the teaching profession, enable researchers to gauge the teachers' sense of purpose. The elements that help investigate sense of purpose are:

1. Teachers' perceptions of their role(s), sense of identity, and motivation; and,
2. Teachers' understanding of the matters that they are required to address, such as pedagogical changes imposed by education policy (Pantić, 2015).

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2. Competence

According to Pantić (2015), agency involves "efforts to transform the structures and cultures as well as acting within them" (p. 767). This constitutes an agent's competence and can be investigated through, one, an agent's understanding of his or her social and cultural contexts and, two, the actions made by the agent in response to such contexts. Because such actions are more often than not intended to be transformative, the agent needs to be resourceful—hence competent—in finding, or initiating, the means to achieve the desired transformation. Specifically for teacher agency, the elements that help investigate competence are:

1. Teachers' understanding of social, cultural, and political factors that influence their teaching contexts and their capacity to act in such contexts; and,
2. Teachers' engagement in actions that aim to promote the desired change, such as professional collaboration or community networking (Pantić, 2015).

3. Autonomy

The extent that teachers are capable of acting by and on behalf of themselves depends as much on internal forces as on external ones. Pantić (2015) referred the internal forces to the notion of self-efficacy, which in the simplest sense means "having an effect" (p. 768) and is "a central mechanism for exercise of human agency which determines levels of motivation reflected in how much effort people will exert in an endeavor and for how long they will preserve [*sic*] in the face of obstacles" (Bandura 1989, 1997, cited in Pantić, 2015, p. 768). Thus, Pantić (2015) explained, teachers' self-efficacy—the internal driving forces of their autonomy—stems from the teachers believing that they themselves, or together with their colleagues, possess a "capacity to have an effect" and therefore "can do something or achieve a worthy outcome" (p. 768), and this is one step to transformative actions. However, there are also external driving forces which could either enhance or inhibit autonomy—the social, cultural, and political contexts that determine whether teachers' actions would in fact take form. So, to investigate autonomy, the elements to be considered are:

1. Teachers' beliefs in self- and collective efficacy, their confidence, and their sense of control;
2. Teachers' relationship with one another, in forms of collaboration, trust, and power relations;
3. Teachers' perception of the school culture—including authoritative or leadership system—and of their role(s) within this culture; and,
4. Teachers' perception of broader social, cultural, and political contexts, such as professional community or education policy (Pantić, 2015).

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4. Reflexivity

While human actions are commonly performed with particular reasons, these reasons are not usually articulated because the actors oftentimes do not need to, and at times are not able to, do so. Pantić (2015) thus brought up the importance of reflexivity in studying teacher agency. The reason is that, the unarticulated reasoning behind each action is valuable for a knowledge transfer among actors and, consequently, an expansion of actions in order to achieve the desired change. As the environment changes, actions of agents within it also change, which could subsequently bring about further changes in the environment and in the agents' actions. This continuous cycle implies that agents need to constantly evaluate both the situation and their actions, then decide what, how, or whether to adjust. Thus, teachers not only need to reflect on their own practice but should also articulate it in order to pass the knowledge on to others in their community. To gauge, and indeed promote, reflexivity, the elements to be investigated are:

1. Teachers' interpretation of their work contexts, such as institutional structure and culture;
2. Teachers' reflection on their practices and factors that influences their practices in such contexts; and,
3. Teachers' capacity to rationalize their actions and pass down their professional knowledge (Pantić, 2015).

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The development of questionnaire items and interview guide—for both focus group interview and semi-structured one-to-one interview—in this study was guided by Pantić's (2015) model for analyzing teacher agency discussed above. The researcher obtained permission, via an e-mail correspondence, from the model developer, Nataša Pantić, to adapt her model for use in this study (N. Pantić, personal communication, September 17, 2017). The questionnaire survey and the interview guide, along with notes on how Pantić's (2015) model was incorporated into the items, topics, or questions, are presented in Appendix C (questionnaire survey) and Appendix D (interview guide).

3.4.3 Development and validation of instruments

Validation of research instruments via expert review and piloting prior to their actual use is a crucial process strongly emphasized in many research instruction books—for instance, Dörnyei (2003), Dörnyei (2007), and Creswell (2014), among others. Dörnyei (2007) likened piloting of research instruments to a dress rehearsal of theater performances, a necessary procedure to "ensure the high quality (in terms of reliability and validity) of the outcomes in the specific context" (p. 75).

For questionnaire survey, Dörnyei (2007) recommended a multiple-step process to pilot and validate the items at various stages of the questionnaire development. After putting together a collection of "potential items"—also referred to as an "item pool"—the researcher enters the *initial piloting* stage, where the item pool is piloted with the researcher's three or four colleagues, so as to obtain their feedback on, for example, items that should be kept or removed or errors that should be corrected (Dörnyei, 2007, p. 112). Then, using the feedback obtained from these colleagues, the researcher moves on to the *final piloting* or the "dress rehearsal" stage, where he or she prepares a "near-final version" of the questionnaire survey and pilot it with a group of people whose characteristics resemble those of the target participants of the research (Dörnyei, 2007, p. 112). The responses from this larger pilot group are then statistically analyzed in the next stage—an *item analysis* stage—to find out which items could and should be included in the final version of the questionnaire survey. Finally, after its actual administration, the questionnaire survey undergoes *post hoc item analysis*, using the same statistical analysis as does the previous stage, to screen out the items that, during actual implementation, do not work as intended (Dörnyei, 2007) and thus would not meaningfully contribute to data analysis and research findings.

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Although it seems obvious that questionnaire items should be piloted because the instrument is distributed directly to participants, piloting is perhaps less thought of when it comes to an interview guide—either for focus group interview or for semi-structured one-to-one interview—as the researcher is the only person holding on to the set of questions or topics to be discussed. However, Dörnyei (2007) stressed that piloting an interview guide is no less important than piloting a questionnaire survey, as it can help the researcher (a) identify whether the included topics and questions are relevant to the research objectives and (b) validate the content and the structure of the interview guide and determine what will, or will not, work in actual implementation.

Dörnyei (2007) also recommended that the researcher conduct trial interviews so as to "ensure that the questions elicit sufficiently rich data and do not dominate the flow of the conversation" (Dörnyei, 2007, p. 137). While this may seem time-consuming, it is by no means time-wasting because the researcher does not "have to discard the obtained data after these 'trial runs' but can use it for the final analysis" (Dörnyei, 2007, p. 75). Referring to Richards (2005), Dörnyei (2007) added that data obtained from trial interviews in fact benefit the research because even though "[t]hese early responses may differ from the ones coming from later stages, [such] differences are 'food for analysis, not a problem of consistency'" (Dörnyei, 2007, p. 75).

A separate, but significant, note on focus group interview was given by Dörnyei (2007) that "a focus group is only as good as its moderator" (p. 145). This is because focus group interview consists of multiple participants, who interact not only with the researcher but also among themselves. Therefore, the responsibility of the researcher is not merely to ask questions but also to facilitate the discussion and moderate the group dynamics, not to mention the need for him or her to stay alert to emerging responses and come up with probing questions at the instant and, to say the least, the need to take notes (Creswell, 2014; Dörnyei, 2007). Hence, preparation and practice are crucial to the success of focus group interview.

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The researcher applied the validation process to the three instruments of this study, as advised by Creswell (2014) and Dörnyei (2007) in the aforementioned paragraphs, albeit to a limited scale due to time and resource constraints. The instrument development and validation process of this study took place from August to December, 2018, and was conducted as follows: The first draft of the questionnaire survey was piloted with three of the researcher's colleagues—two Thais and one foreigner. Two common—and major—comments received were (1) the language used in the questionnaire survey was too formal, textbook-like, and wordy and (2) the questionnaire survey was too long. The researcher thus simplified the language and cut down the length of the questionnaire survey by following three suggestions from colleagues, which were:

1. Scope the class context to only one undergraduate compulsory English course (of the participants' choice). Even though in reality the participants may teach many classes of different levels—and influences from these other courses may indeed be present—having a definite scope would help the participants to be more focused and respond to the questionnaire survey more easily because a particular question may otherwise be answered differently given different class contexts. This also helped reduce the number of items in the class context section of the questionnaire survey.
2. Consider which information is "need to have" and which is "nice to have" and cut down on the latter. For example, initially in the background information section, the researcher not only asked for the levels of education obtained but also the type of institution attended for each level (i.e., public vs. private). This question was simplified to only asking for the highest level of education obtained.
3. Combine redundant questions regarding the two policy documents. It was suggested that, as the two policy documents are enacted together, the questions could and should be combined instead of asking two sets of the same questions, one set for each policy document. However, to avoid confusion and to remind the participants that there are two separate texts, the plural form "policies" was used in the questionnaire survey.

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As for the interview guide, the major comment received was regarding the language. Similar to that of the questionnaire survey, the language used in the interview guide was initially too formal, textbook-like, and wordy. It was suggested that, in the actual interview session, the researcher use "spoken language" and be more concise—yet precise—when asking questions. One colleague also suggested grouping words in the word list (to be used by participants for answering questions 11 and 12) as positive words, negative words, or neutral words, so that the words would be easily found by the participants.

In addition to the overall language use, there was also a suggestion regarding the scope of response. Unlike the comment received for the questionnaire survey, it was suggested that, for the interview—in both a focus group format and a one-to-one format—the participants be allowed to tell of their overall experience in English language teaching rather than of their experience teaching a particular course. This is because teacher agency must be discerned from holistic experience, and details from stories of broader teaching contexts would better reveal the nuance of elements that influence teacher agency.

After the questionnaire survey and the interview guide had been revised, the researcher prepared a complete set of instruments, the word list, and the excerpt of the two policy documents and submitted them along with the index of item-objective congruence (IOC) rating form to three experts for their review.

Comments received from the three experts suggested that the questionnaire survey could be further streamlined. First, adjustment to the language use or word choice was needed to make the questions clearer or more answerable. For example, for the questionnaire item that asked "Where do you obtain the course objective(s), course syllabus, and/or lesson plan for this course?" one expert commented that using "where" may limit the answer to some degree and suggested changing the question word to "how" instead. Another suggestion was on the questionnaire item that asked the participants about their study abroad experience. In the case that the participants had studied abroad in many countries, it was not clear how they should put down the answer—whether they should list all countries and specify the time period of each one. It was suggested that the question ask only for most recent experiences, such as the most recent two or three countries. Moreover, to help shorten the length of the questionnaire survey, some questions could be grouped together. In the case of study abroad items, for example, the researcher could provide space for the participants to list the countries and length of study within the same item as opposed to asking for the two pieces of information in separate items.

Second, formatting of the questionnaire survey was needed in order to aid the participants when they read and respond to the items. For example, one expert suggested that the font of section and sub-section headings be highlighted, bolded, or put in a frame. This is to make the section/sub-section more outstanding so that the participants could follow the flow of the items accurately, especially for questions that require a skip-logic (e.g., the participants must skip to a certain question depending on

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whether they answer yes or no). Another formatting matter that may seem minute but was in fact important was that the open-ended items of the questionnaire survey must provide sufficient space for the participants to answer.

As for the interview guide, while the three experts did not instruct any changes in language use, they wanted the researcher to make sure that the participants would clearly understand certain terms used in the questions, such as what is meant by "work environment outside the classroom." Also, one expert would like the researcher to explain in detail what the participants need to do with the word list, as the instruction provided in the interview guide was not clear enough. The researcher would like to note here that while none of the three experts commented on the label of the word list (i.e., positive words, negative words, and neutral words), further piloting and the first few administrations of the interview made the researcher realize that some words may be positive to one person but negative to another person (e.g., while a "friendly" relationship with students was considered positive by most participants, one participant described it as becoming negative in that she had lost her personal space as a result). Alternatively, a seemingly negative word may in fact describe a positive situation for a particular participant (e.g., one participant belonged to a clique—hence chose "cliquish"—which offered him advantage in the workplace). Therefore, the researcher removed the positive, neutral, and negative labels and simply grouped the words as "Column A," "Column B," and "Column C."

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After having undergone expert review, the instruments were revised and streamlined once more and administered in trial runs. The questionnaire survey was piloted with four English teachers, three of whom were Thai and one foreigner. Although the researcher did not use statistics to conduct item analysis of the questionnaire items, she discussed with each teacher in the pilot group in detail which items should be revised further or removed from the questionnaire survey altogether. The researcher would also like to note that, in the same vein, the post hoc item analysis of the questionnaire items was not done using statistics but by the researcher analyzing the received data together with an expert—with identity and affiliation of participants kept strictly confidential to the researcher—in order to determine the usability of the questionnaire items and their responses.

The interview guide was piloted as semi-structured one-to-one interview with two English teachers, one Thai and one foreigner. The two pilot runs did not result in major changes in the interview guide but allowed the researcher to practice interviewing skills. Namely, the researcher had a chance to practice asking the questions in a way that would be easily understood by the participants. At the same time, she learned to manage the flow of the interview, to recoup the participants when they slid off topic, and to manage time. In addition, as suggested by Richards (2005), cited in Dörnyei (2007), the researcher treated the responses from the two trial interviews as data to be later analyzed for research findings.

3.5 Data collection

After receiving permission from concerned authorities, the researcher commenced the participant recruitment process by announcing her research undertaking to personal and referred colleagues working at faculties or departments responsible for English language instruction in public and private higher education institutions. Once potential participants were identified and initially approached, a formal invitation letter from the researcher's institution, along with the research information sheet, was issued to all potential participants. This was done in order to give participants an opportunity to consider and ask questions about the study before deciding whether or not to take part. Upon their agreement to participate, all participants received a consent form for their review and signature. Then, data collection proceeded with a questionnaire survey. Some participants preferred to receive the questionnaire survey via e-mail before the interview session, while some opted to fill out the questionnaire survey on paper on the interview day. Depending on the participants' preference and availability, the questionnaire survey was followed by either a focus group interview or a semi-structured one-to-one interview, all of which was audio-recorded upon the participants' consent. The overall validity of the data was ensured through both methodological triangulation—that is, using multiple data collection methods with a particular data source—and data source triangulation—that is, gathering a certain aspect of data from different data sources.

While the model proposed by Pantić (2015), on which this study's instrument development was based, suggests a longitudinal research design—even though the

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recommended length of research period is not explicitly indicated—the time constraint and limited resources associated with the study prohibited a lengthy data collection time frame. Data collection of this study commenced in January, 2019, and completed in August of the same year. Despite such limitations, the researcher tried to capture what Shulman (1986) called "the core of classroom life" which encompasses

> two sorts of transactions [agendas] that comprise classroom life…The contents of these two agendas, these forms of pedagogical transmission, are at the very heart of the educational enterprise, because they define what schools are for, what purposes they are designed to accomplish. (p. 8)

The two agendas referred to by Shulman (1986) are as follows:

1. The hidden curriculum: The organizational, interactional, social, and management aspect of classroom life; and,
2. The manifest curriculum: The academic task, school assignment, and classroom content. (Shulman, 1986, p. 8)

To gauge this so-called "the core of classroom life," a number of studies related to teacher agency employed classroom observation as one of their research instruments so as to obtain an insider perspective. However, for this study, the researcher did not opt for classroom observation because she did not wish to interfere with the classroom dynamics and exert influence on the behavior of both the teachers and the students with her presence, the results from which would yield biased data. However, using research instruments that does not require the researcher to situate him- or herself in the participants' real-time environment does not necessarily negate the prospect of obtaining insightful data, as Shulman (1986) also explained that

> [t]he perspective taken by the research can be that of an outside observer attempting to discover the lawful relationships among the observable features, or the emphasis can be on discovering the meanings constructed by the participants as they attempt to make sense of the circumstances they both encounter and create. (p. 8)

Furthermore, by requiring less engagement in the participants' routine activities—for instance, not intruding into the their classrooms—the researcher would also be able to gain access into the research site more easily (Creswell, 2014). Due to the limitation of time and resources of this study, the researcher deemed that ease of access to

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Table 14

Data collection process broken down by instrument

Instrument	Data collection process
Questionnaire survey	1. Developed and validated questionnaire items via peer review and expert review 2. Piloted questionnaire survey 3. Revised questionnaire survey 4. Re-validated and finalized questionnaire survey 5. Asked for permission from concerned authorities 6. Asked for consent from participants 7. Administered questionnaire survey • Distributed via e-mail • Distributed in person 8. Retrieved questionnaire survey from participants • Downloaded response from e-mail • Collected questionnaire survey distributed in person
Focus group interview and semi-structured one-to-one interview	1. Developed and validated interview guide via peer review and expert review 2. Piloted interview guide (in semi-structured one-to-one interview format) 3. Revised interview guide 4. Re-validated and finalized interview guide 5. Asked for permission from concerned authorities 6. Asked for consent from participants 7. Implemented focus group or semi-structured one-to-one interview as preferred by participants (audio-recorded)

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research sites, as well as to gatekeepers and participants of such sites, would be crucial to allow her to proceed with data collection in a timely manner. Thus, non-intruding qualitative-oriented instruments, such as focus group interview and semi-structured one-to-one interview, were used in this study. Table 14 summarizes the study's data collection process, broken down by instrument.

3.6 Data analysis

As discussed in the section above, this study employed instruments that collected both quantitative-oriented data as well as qualitative-oriented data. Quantitative data were primarily obtained through closed-ended items of the questionnaire survey. Tallying of responses from focus group interview and semi-structured one-to-one interview also added to the quantification of qualitative data. Regardless of whence they were obtained, all quantitative data were analyzed using descriptive statistics, such as percentages, frequency counts, rating, or ranking. Validity and reliability of quantitative data were ensured through various measures, starting from the process of instrument development—by making sure that all research instruments were valid in both construct and content—all the way through to the selection of statistics that was appropriate for the analysis of the obtained data.

The three instruments used in the study also yielded qualitative data. However, such data predominantly came from focus group interview and semi-structured one-to-one interview and to a lesser extent from open-ended items of the questionnaire survey. All qualitative data were analyzed using content analysis. That is, open-ended questionnaire responses were read and coded according to emerging or common themes, while focus group interview and semi-structured one-to-one interview responses were first transcribed, then coded according to emerging or common themes. The researcher was the main coder of these data and ensured intracoder reliability by coding the data twice, with an interval of one to two months between the two coding sessions. In addition, to ensure validity and reliability of the coded data, another individual who is knowledgeable in English language teaching and assessment was asked to code a portion of data from each instrument—once again, with identity and affiliation of participants kept strictly confidential to the researcher. The intercoder reliability is 91.1%, which exceeds the minimum of 80-percent agreement recommended by Green (1998).

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Finally, data from all three instruments were then analyzed with respect to information gathered from policy text analysis so as to answer the research questions. Table 15 summarizes the study’s data analysis process, along with corresponding reliability and validity measures, broken down by instrument.

3.7 Chapter summary

This chapter presents the detail of this study’s research methodology. It begins with a depiction of the context of the study, detailing the three main facets of such context—policy context, institutional context, and classroom context. It then describes the participants of the study, along with participant selection scheme and sampling

Table 15

Data analysis process broken down by instrument

Instrument	Data analysis	Reliability and validity measures
Questionnaire survey	1. Quantitative data • Descriptive statistics	1. Quantitative data • Construct and content validity of instruments • Selection of appropriate statistics for analysis of obtained data
	2. Qualitative data • Content analysis for emerging or common themes	2. Qualitative data • Intracoder reliability • Intercoder reliability (91.1% agreement)
Focus group interview and semi-structured one-to-one interview	1. Qualitative data • Content analysis for emerging or common themes	1. Qualitative data • Intracoder reliability • Intercoder reliability (91.1% agreement)
	2. Quantification of qualitative data • Descriptive statistics	2. Quantification of qualitative data • Construct and content validity of instruments • Selection of appropriate statistics for analysis of obtained data

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method. The chapter moves on to describe the research framework—foregrounding the research design as well as the conceptual framework that guides such design. This section is then followed by a detailed account of three research instruments—questionnaire survey, focus group interview, and semi-structured one-to-one interview. The rationale for use of each instrument, the model for instrument development, and the development and validation process of each instrument are also discussed. The following two sections then explain the study's data collection and data analysis processes, and the chapter is at this point concluding with a chapter summary. The next chapter, Chapter 4, will present the findings of this study.

CHAPTER IV
RESEARCH FINDINGS

Chapter 4 presents findings of the study, the details of which are organized by research questions, each depicting results from quantitative data and qualitative data, respectively. To reiterate, quantitative data were primarily obtained from questionnaire survey, and qualitative data were primarily obtained from focus group interview and semi-structured one-to-one interview. Where appropriate, the researcher also includes observations she made during the interviews as part of the qualitative data pool. To aid the readers, an overview of participants' teaching context is provided at the beginning of the chapter, and results of the questionnaire survey are provided in Appendix E.

4.1 General teaching context

Information on the general teaching context, scoped within the undergraduate compulsory English course that each of the 63 teachers chose to report, was obtained through section 1 (Q1–Q6) of the questionnaire survey. The aim of this questionnaire section is to gauge, albeit at a surface level, the following aspects:

- the teachers' understanding of their teaching context;
- the teachers' ability to control or make decision within their teaching context; and,
- the professional support that they receive within their teaching context.

This information was gathered so as to help the researcher, and subsequently the readers of this dissertation, better comprehend the responses given in the questionnaire survey and in the interview.

This section of the questionnaire survey starts off with questions pertaining to course title and class size (Q1–Q3). As each participant selected his or her own course to report, there is a variation in course title and course level, both in terms of the level of students' academic year and in terms of the level of language difficulty. However, as requested by the researcher, all are compulsory English courses for undergraduate students. On average, there are 12 sections to the course (minimum = 1, maximum =

119, mode = 1), and the teachers' average teaching load is three sections (minimum = 1, maximum = 30, mode = 1). The average class size is 37 students, even though the mode is slightly higher, at 40 students (minimum = 10, maximum = 96).

The questionnaire survey then asked about aspects of course objective(s), course syllabus, and lesson plan (Q4 and Q4a–Q4h), the responses from which are summarized in Table 16. As seen in the responses for Q4, over half of the teachers (n = 35, 56%) reported that they do not create their own course objective(s), course syllabus, and/or lesson plan. Of these 35 teachers, 31 (89%) reported that they obtain these materials from the course coordinator (Q4a). In terms of information and/or training sessions, of these 35 teachers, 27 (77%) are given only an information session, with only four teachers (11%) reporting that they receive both an information session and a training session, and four other teachers (11%) reporting that they receive neither an information session nor a training session (Q4b). Even so, most of these 35 teachers (n = 31, 89%) reported that they clearly understand the given course objective(s), course syllabus, and/or lesson plan (Q4c), and all but one of them are either completely comfortable or somewhat comfortable using such information (Q4d).

For teachers who create their own course objective(s), course syllabus, and/or lesson plan (n = 28, 44%), as seen in Q4e, most of them use their own experience or personal initiative in finding external resources to create such materials. Over half of the teachers in this group (n = 17 out of 28, 61%) consult readily available resources such as commercial textbooks or language standard guidelines, and a little under half of the teachers in this group (n = 13 out of 28, 46%) apply knowledge from trainings, seminars, or conferences that they attended on their own without being required or sponsored by their institution. Even among those who selected "Other" as their answers (n = 12 out of 28, 43%), self-initiation can also be seen in their responses, as evident in the top three methods used, which are:

- using external resources, e.g., handbook, commercial textbooks, online quizzes (n = 5);
- using past experience in teaching similar courses or trial and error of what they used to do elsewhere (n = 3);

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Table 16

Aspects of course objectives, course syllabus, and/or lesson plan

Aspects	n	%
Q4 Do you create your own course objective(s), course syllabus, and/or lesson plan for this course? (n = 63)		
No	35	56
Yes	28	44
For teachers who answered "No" (n = 35):		
Q4a How do you obtain the course objective(s), course syllabus, and/or lesson plan for this course (select all that apply)?		
From course coordinator	31	89
From training session for this course	1	3
From information session for this course	3	9
Other	2	6
Q4b Do you receive training or information session on this course and its objective(s), syllabus, and/or lesson plan?		
Training session only	0	0
Information session only	27	77
Both training and information sessions	4	11
None	4	11
Q4c How much do you understand the course objective(s), course syllabus, and/or lesson plan that you receive for this course?		
Clearly understand	31	89
Somewhat understand	4	11
Do not understand at all	0	0
Q4d How comfortable are you in using the course objective(s), course syllabus, and/or lesson plan that you receive for this course?		
Completely comfortable	18	51
Somewhat comfortable	16	46
Not comfortable at all	1	3

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Aspects	n	%
For teachers who answered "Yes" (n = 28):		
Q4e How do you create the course objective(s), course syllabus, and/or lesson plan for this course (select all that apply)?		
Apply knowledge from training, seminar, or conference that I attend on my own	13	46
Apply knowledge from training, seminar, or conference provided by my institution	7	25
Follow directions/instructions from supervisor, department head, or course coordinator	8	29
Use readily available resources, such as commercial textbooks or language standard guidelines	17	61
Other	12	43
Q4f Do your course objective(s), course syllabus, and/or lesson plan have to be approved by anyone?		
No	14	50
Yes	14	50
Q4g Do you train other teachers of this course to use the course objective(s), syllabus, and/or lesson plan?		
No, I am the only teacher of this course.	7	25
No, other teacher/staff does the training.	2	7
No, there is no training session.	12	43
Yes, I train other teachers of this course.	7	25
Q4h Are you in charge of monitoring all teachers of this course so that the course objective(s), course syllabus, and/or lesson plan are followed through in the same pace and manner?		
Not applicable. I am the only teacher of this course.	8	29
No, other teacher/staff does the monitoring.	2	7
No, there is no monitoring.	7	25
Yes, I am in charge of monitoring all teachers of this course.	11	39

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- using experience and data from their own research (n = 2); and,
- using course description, syllabus, and objectives as a guideline to create their own version (n = 2).

The last method mentioned implies that some teachers may have received the course objective(s), course syllabus, and/or lesson plan. However, they do not follow the given information word-by-word but, rather, adapt the information to suit their context. This could imply a certain degree of agency being exercised by such teachers.

Interestingly, exactly half of the teachers who create their own course objective(s), course syllabus, and/or lesson plan reported that their course objective(s), course syllabus, and/or lesson plan must be approved (Q4f), mostly by their supervisor or those in the administrative or managerial position (e.g., Dean, Department Head, Program Head, Vice President in Academic Affairs), while exactly the other half reported that no approval is required of them. This could also imply a certain degree of freedom that these teachers can exercise agency in their practice. That said, of the 28 teachers in this group, 12 teachers (43%) reported that there is no training session for the created information (Q4g), yet 11 teachers (39%) reported that they need to monitor other teachers who teach this same course (Q4h). So, perhaps these teachers have some degree of freedom because they are the ones who do the monitoring and hence may have some authoritative role for the course. Still, the fact that there is no training session makes it questionable whether other teachers would be able to work in the same pace and manner as the course progresses. Thus, it is also questionable whether this creating and monitoring power is freedom given to individual teachers or in truth a result of a lack of structure in the workplace, engendering the need for these teachers to take such initiatives on their own.

As for teaching materials and/or methodology (Q5 and Q5a–Q5h, summarized in Table 17), even though most teachers reported that they are given the course objective(s), course syllabus, and/or lesson plan, most of them are able to select their own teaching materials and/or methodology. In fact, the number of teachers who answered “Yes” (able to make their own selection) is almost twice as many as those who answered “No” (Q5).

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Table 17

Aspects of teaching materials and/or methodology

Aspects	n	%
Q5 Do you create or select your own teaching materials and/or methodology for this course? (n = 63)		
No	22	35
Yes	41	65
For teachers who answered "No" (n = 22):		
Q5a How do you obtain the teaching materials and/or methodology for this course (select all that apply)?		
From course coordinator	17	77
From training session for this course	1	5
From information session for this course	4	18
Other	5	23
Q5b Do you receive training or information session on how to use the teaching materials and/or methodology for this course?		
Training session only	0	0
Information session only	13	59
Both training and information sessions	3	14
None	6	27
Q5c How much do you understand how to use the teaching materials and/or methodology that you receive for this course?		
Clearly understand	16	73
Somewhat understand	5	23
Do not understand at all	1	5
Q5d How comfortable are you in using the teaching materials and/or methodology that you receive for this course?		
Completely comfortable	12	55
Somewhat comfortable	8	36
Not comfortable at all	2	9

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Aspects	n	%
For teachers who answered "Yes" (n = 41):		
Q5e How do you create or select the teaching materials and/or methodology for this course (select all that apply)?		
Apply knowledge from training, seminar, or conference that I attend on my own	22	54
Apply knowledge from training, seminar, or conference provided by my institution	11	27
Follow directions/instructions from supervisor, department head, or course coordinator	11	27
Use readily available resources, such as commercial textbooks or language standard guidelines	28	68
Other	17	41
Q5f Do your teaching materials and/or methodology have to be approved by anyone?		
No	31	76
Yes	10	24
Q5g Do you train other teachers of this course to use the teaching materials and/or methodology?		
No, I am the only teacher of this course.	10	24
No, other teacher/staff does the training.	1	2
No, there is no training session.	22	54
Yes, I train other teachers of this course.	8	20
Q5h Are you in charge of monitoring all teachers of this course so that the teaching materials and/or methodology are followed through in the same pace and manner?		
Not applicable. I am the only teacher of this course.	11	27
No, other teacher/staff does the monitoring.	9	22
No, there is no monitoring.	11	27
Yes, I am in charge of monitoring all teachers of this course.	10	24

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For the “No” teachers (n = 22, 35%)—those who are given teaching materials and/or methodology to use—as seen in Q5a, most of them (n = 17, 77%) received the materials and/or methodology from, once again, their course coordinator. Also once again, most of them (n = 13, 59%) are provided with only an information session, with only three teachers (14%) receiving both an information session and a training session and six teachers (27%) receiving neither (Q5b). Yet, the majority of the teachers in this group (n = 16, 73%) reported that they clearly understand the given materials and/or methodology (Q5c), and a little over half (n = 12, 55%) are completely comfortable using what they receive (Q5d).

Similar to the teachers who create their own course objective(s), course syllabus, and/or lesson plan, teachers who create their own teaching materials and/or methodology (n = 41, 65%) source their materials upon their own initiation. As seen in Q5e, of these 41 teachers, 28 (68%) use readily available resources, such as commercial textbooks or language standard guidelines, and 22 (54%) apply knowledge from trainings, seminars, or conferences that they attend on their own. The top three methods of teachers in this group who answered “Other” (n = 17, 41%) also show self-initiation, which are:

- using external resources, e.g., online resources, pre-compiled materials (n = 8);
- using personal resources, e.g., creativity, personal experience (n = 5); and,
- using experience and data from their own research (n = 4).

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The majority of the teachers in this group (n = 31, 76%) also reported that they do not need approval from their supervisor or management to use the teaching materials and/or methodology that they create or select (Q5f). A little over half of them (n = 22, 54%) reported that there is no training session for the materials and/or methodology (Q5g), which could result from the fact that they are the sole instructor of the course (n = 11, 27%) or that there is simply no monitoring of the usage of such teaching materials/methodology (n = 11, 27%) (Q5h).

Thus, it seems that the teachers in this study can—or are granted the freedom to—exercise a certain degree of agency in the aspect of sourcing and selecting their teaching materials and/or methodology.

Another aspect of the teaching context asked in this section of the questionnaire survey is with regard to assessment and grading scheme (Q6 and Q6a–Q6h, summarized in Table 18). Seen from responses in Q6, over half of the teachers (n = 37, 59%) reported being able to create their own assessment and grading schemes for their course. For those who cannot do so (n = 26, 41%), once again, the majority of them (n = 23, 88%) receive such information or materials from their course coordinator (Q6a). Most of the teachers who do not create their own assessment and grading schemes (n = 18, 69%) received only an information session, while similar numbers of teachers reported receiving both an information session and a training session (n = 3, 12%) or receiving nothing (n = 4, 15%) (Q6b). Yet, of the 26 teachers in this group, as many as 19 (73%) reported that they clearly understand the given assessment and grading schemes (Q6c), and over half (n = 15, 58%) are completely comfortable using what is given to them (Q6d).

Also similar to the teachers who create their own course objective(s), course syllabus, and/or lesson plan, and to the teachers who create their own teaching materials and/or methodology, teachers who create their own assessment and grading schemes (n = 37, 59%) also use past experience and personal initiatives as their main sources. A little over half of the teachers in this group (n = 20, 54%) use readily available resources, and just over half (n = 19, 51%) use knowledge that they gathered from attending trainings, seminars, or conferences on their own (Q6e). Personal initiation is also shown in the “Other” responses (n = 12, 32%), which are:

- using course description and objectives as guideline to create their own version (n = 4);
- using experience and data from their own research (n = 3);
- using personal objectives that they set for their students (n = 3); and,
- using past experience in teaching (n = 3).

Perhaps both interestingly and surprisingly, most of the teachers who create their own assessment and grading schemes (n = 24, 65%) reported that no approval is needed for the assessment and grading schemes that they create (Q6f); almost half

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Table 18

Aspects of assessment and grading scheme

Aspects	n	%
Q6 Do you create your own assessment (quizzes, tests, presentations, etc.) and grading schemes for this course? (n = 63)		
No	26	41
Yes	37	59
For teachers who answered "No" (n = 26):		
Q6a How do you obtain the assessment and grading schemes for this course (select all that apply)?		
From course coordinator	23	88
From training session for this course	0	0
From information session for this course	6	23
Other	4	15
Q6b Do you receive training or information session on the assessment and grading schemes for this course?		
Training session only	1	4
Information session only	18	69
Both training and information sessions	3	12
None	4	15
Q6c How much do you understand the assessment and grading schemes for this course?		
Clearly understand	19	73
Somewhat understand	6	23
Do not understand at all	1	4
Q6d How comfortable are you in using the assessment and grading schemes for this course?		
Completely comfortable	15	58
Somewhat comfortable	10	38
Not comfortable at all	1	4

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Aspects	n	%
For teachers who answered "Yes" (n = 37):		
Q6e How do you create the assessment and grading schemes for this course (select all that apply)?		
Apply knowledge from training, seminar, or conference that I attend on my own	19	51
Apply knowledge from training, seminar, or conference provided by my institution	9	24
Follow directions/instructions from supervisor, department head, or course coordinator	7	19
Use readily available resources, such as commercial textbooks or language standard guidelines	20	54
Other	12	32
Q6f Do your assessment and grading schemes have to be approved by anyone?		
No	24	65
Yes	13	35
Q6g Do you train other teachers of this course to use the assessment and grading schemes?		
No, I am the only teacher of this course.	10	27
No, other teacher/staff does the training.	3	8
No, there is no training session.	17	46
Yes, I train other teachers of this course.	7	19
Q6h Are you in charge of monitoring all teachers of this course so that the assessment and grading schemes are followed through in the same pace and manner?		
Not applicable. I am the only teacher of this course.	11	30
No, other teacher/staff does the monitoring.	5	14
No, there is no monitoring.	11	30
Yes, I am in charge of monitoring all teachers of this course.	10	27

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(n = 17, 46%) reported that there is no training session (Q6g); and one third (n = 11, 30%) reported that there is no monitoring of the usage of such assessment and grading schemes (Q6h). However, it should be noted that, with regard to monitoring other teachers so that everyone works in the same pace and manner, one third of the teachers in this group (n = 11, 30%) also reported that this is not applicable, as they are the sole instructor of the course (Q6h).

Therefore, it seems that the teachers in this study can—or are granted the freedom to—exercise agency with respect to creating their own assessment and grading schemes as well.

From the responses in Q4, Q5, and Q6, it seems that teachers in this study have a certain degree of freedom to exercise agency in their teaching context. While the above findings seem promising, it is yet too soon to conclude that the general teaching context provides favorable conditions for teacher agency to be exercised and achieved. Looking at these findings from two different angles, these teachers could be exercising their agency either because they are given the freedom to use agency or because they are forced to act in order to survive in an unfortunate "sink or swim" situation. This is a point to ponder, and it is hoped that more can be revealed and further understood from answers to the three research questions, which are discussed below.

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4.2 Findings for research question 1

Research question 1: How do English teachers understand the English language assessment policy imposed on their institution, and what is their interpretation of such policy?

To avoid confusion in reading the findings for research question 1, the researcher would like to clarify that the term "understanding" in the context of this study is not solely equated with "knowledge" but, rather, refers to how the participants discern the words, phrases, and information in the policy texts. As will be seen in the findings below, the participants' understanding of policy texts come in many levels, some of which are concerned with matters as fundamental as whether the participants know what a particular word means or how a particular table should be read. Such matters will be detailed more fully in the qualitative data results section.

4.2.1 Quantitative data results

Section 2 of the questionnaire survey asked the teachers about their awareness, understanding, and interpretation of the policy in focus of this study (Q7–Q26). The section starts off with questions on awareness of policy and source of such awareness, if any. The researcher would like to note once again that, as the policy in focus of this study comprises texts from two policy documents, to avoid confusion and to remind the teachers that there are two separate texts, the plural form “policies” was used in the questionnaire survey.

As seen in Table 19 and Table 20 (Q7–Q8 of the questionnaire survey), when asked about their awareness of the two policy texts, 28 out of 63 teachers (44%) are aware of both policy texts, while 20 other (32%) none of the policy texts. Of the teachers who are aware of at least one policy text (n = 43, 68%), 24 of them (56%) learn from an announcement in the departmental or institutional meeting and 12 (28%) from conversation with teaching colleagues or department staff. Among the 11 teachers (26%) who learn from “Other” sources, the top two responses are reading from general media, such as the newspaper or the Internet (n = 3) and conducting professional or educational research, such as that for a master’s degree (n = 3), which, similar to the responses seen in section 1 of the questionnaire survey, reflect self-initiation of such teachers. Thus, the teachers learn about the policy through both formal and informal channels of communication, as well as through personal initiatives in searching for information related to their profession.

A dichotomy emerges when the teachers were asked about their role(s) in implementing the policy in their teaching context, as seen in Table 21 to Table 23 (Q9–Q12 of the questionnaire survey). That is, almost an equal number of teachers knew their role is to be a policy implementer in their classroom (n = 27, 43%) and did not know or were unsure what their role is or would be (n = 22, 35%). This suggests

Table 19

Teachers' awareness of the policy in focus of the study (n = 63)

Policy awareness	n	%
Unaware of any policy	20	32
Aware of both the National Education Plan and the policy to upgrade English proficiency standards of higher education graduates	28	44
Aware of only the National Education Plan	5	8
Aware of only the policy to upgrade English proficiency standards of higher education graduates	10	16

Table 20

Teachers' source of policy awareness (n = 43)

Source of policy awareness	n	%
Announcement in department/institution meeting	24	56
Announcement by supervisor or department head	7	16
Conversation with teaching colleagues or department staff	12	28
Participation in professional development/training program	10	23
Formal letter from department/institution authority	4	9
Other	11	26

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Table 21

Teachers' role in implementing the policy in their institution (n = 63)

Role in implementing policy in institution	n	%
Unsure or do not know	22	35
Policy maker	5	8
Policy administrator	7	11
Policy implementer	27	43
Other	9	14

Note. Multiple responses possible.

Table 22

Teachers' choice in performing policy implementation role (n = 41)

Choice in performing policy implementation role	n	%
Role is officially given	11	27
Role is not officially given but obligated to perform	20	49
Role is of participants' own choice	10	24

Table 23

Teachers' comfortableness in performing policy implementation role (n = 41)

Comfortableness in performing policy implementation role	n	%
Completely comfortable	20	49
Somewhat comfortable	21	51
Not comfortable at all	0	0

that, for these teachers, awareness or understanding of the policy texts is one thing, but perception of what they need to do—their role(s) under this policy—is quite another. Among the 41 teachers who are aware that they have some type of roles to perform under the policy, 11 (27%) reported that the roles are officially given to them, mostly by administrative or management personnel in their institution. On the other hand, approximately half of the teachers in this group (n = 20, 49%) reported that these roles are not officially given to them, but they know they have to do it. This implies a sense of being forced, albeit not directly, to take up roles. However, none of the teachers in this group—those who are aware that they have roles to perform, whether or not officially bestowed—reported "Not comfortable at all" in doing so. In fact, almost an equal number of teachers reported that they are somewhat comfortable (n = 21, 51%) and completely comfortable (n = 20, 49%) of their roles in implementing the policy in their teaching context. This implies that the communication of what roles teachers have to take may not be direct, but the teachers know that when the mandate is top-down, it simply means they must do it.

This section of the questionnaire survey also asked teachers about their perception of the policy by having them rate their agreement with given statements. The statements in Q13 to Q18 are about the benefit(s) and/or disadvantage(s) of the policy in relation to the teaching context of the compulsory English course that the teachers selected to report (summary of response is provided in Table 24). The statements in Q19 to Q26 are about the teachers' overall perception and/or opinion of the policy (summary of response is provided in Table 25). Each set of the statements is discussed below.

Q13–Q18: Benefit(s) and/or disadvantage(s) of the policy in the teaching context of the teachers' selected compulsory English course

Statements with the top 2 boxes (T2B)—that is, responses of ratings of 4 and 5 combined—below 50% indicate that fewer than half of the teachers agree with the statements, which therefore indicate that the majority of the teachers lean toward disagreement with such statements (rating of 1 = strongly disagree, rating of 5 = strongly agree). For Q13 to Q18 (Table 24), such statements include those in Q14, Q16, Q17, and Q18, each of which is reported as follows:

Q14 *These policies put a constraint in English language teaching, learning, and assessment of my compulsory English course.*

This statement receives a mean of 2.90 and T2B of 23 (37%), indicating that the teachers lean toward disagreement with this statement and do not seem to feel that the policy puts a constraint on their teaching context.

Q16 *These policies enable and/or empower me as an English language teacher to make a difference (e.g., being more innovative or experimenting) in teaching, learning, and assessment of my compulsory English course.*

This statement receives a mean of 3.17 and T2B of 26 (41%). With a mean a little above the midpoint of 3 but a T2B below half, this indicates that the teachers seem to be neutral with this statement—that the policy neither enables nor empowers them, but at the same time neither disables nor disempowers them.

Table 24

Teachers' perception of benefits(s) and/or disadvantage(s) of the policy in the teaching context of the teachers' selected compulsory English course (n = 63)

Statement	Mean	Top 2 boxes n	Top 2 boxes %
Q13 These policies enhance English language teaching, learning, and assessment of my compulsory English course.	3.56	38	60
Q14 These policies put a constraint in English language teaching, learning, and assessment of my compulsory English course.	2.90	23	37
Q15 These policies encourage me as an English language teacher to take more action and/or make my own decisions on the teaching, learning, and assessment of my compulsory English course.	3.48	35	56
Q16 These policies enable and/or empower me as an English language teacher to make a difference (e.g., being more innovative or experimenting) in teaching, learning, and assessment of my compulsory English course.	3.17	26	41
Q17 Under these policies, I as an English language teacher would still be a mere follower of prescribed pedagogy.	3.08	24	38
Q18 My role as an English language teacher, including the actions I take and the decisions I make in my compulsory English classroom, would be restricted or restrained in some way by the policies.	2.87	19	30

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Q17 *Under these policies, I as an English language teacher would still be a mere follower of prescribed pedagogy.*

This statement receives a mean of 3.08 and T2B of 24 (38%). With a mean a little above the midpoint of 3 but a T2B quite a bit below half, this once again indicates that the teachers seem to be neutral with this statement—that is, even though they may not feel enabled or empowered (as in Q16), they do not perceive themselves as simply or blindly following the policy mandate either.

Q18 *My role as an English language teacher, including the actions I take and the decisions I make in my compulsory English classroom, would be restricted or restrained in some way by the policies.*

This statement receives a mean of 2.87 and T2B of only 19 (30%), indicating that quite a number of teachers lean toward disagreement with this statement, not perceiving that the policy would restrict or restrain their role, actions, and decisions in their classroom context.

In contrast, two statements within this set that the teachers seem to lean toward agreement are those in Q13 and Q15, which are reported as follows:

Q13 *These policies enhance English language teaching, learning, and assessment of my compulsory English course.*

This statement receives a mean of 3.56 and T2B of 38 (60%).

Q15 *These policies encourage me as an English language teacher to take more action and/or make my own decisions on the teaching, learning, and assessment of my compulsory English course.*

This statement receives a mean of 3.48 and T2B of 35 (56%).

From the responses given to this set of statements (Q13–Q18), it seems that the teachers in this study feel that the policy enhances English language teaching, learning, and assessment as well as encourage them to take more action or make their own decisions in their teaching context (Q13 and Q15). The policy also does not seem to be constraining, restraining, or restricting the teachers (Q14, Q17, and Q18). Yet, the teachers do not feel that they are any more enabled or empowered by the policy (Q16). Thus, it may be the case that while the teachers perceive the policy to be beneficial in some ways to their teaching context, they do not yet perceive themselves to be enabled or empowered by the policy to do anything differently from what they have previously done or are currently doing.

Q19–Q26: Overall perception and/or opinion of the policy

The statements in Q19 to Q26 are about the teachers' overall perception and/or opinion of the policy (Table 25). Looking at the first pair of statements in this set (Q19 and Q20), while the teachers lean toward agreement with Q19 *The objectives of these policies are reasonable.* (Mean 3.49; T2B 35, 56%), they agree much less with Q20 *The objectives of these policies are achievable.* (Mean 3.00; T2B 21, 33%). Thus, even though the teachers seem to agree that the policy objectives are reasonable, they do not seem to feel that such objectives can be achieved.

Similarly for the second pair of statements in this set (Q21 and Q22), while the teachers lean toward agreement with Q21 *It is possible to put the statements/ requirements in these policies into real use.* (Mean 3.51; T2B 35, 56%), they agree less with Q22 *It is practical to put the statements/requirements in these policies into real use.* (Mean 3.22; T2B 26, 41%). This indicates that the teachers feel that there may be a possibility to put the policy into practice in their teaching context, but they may not do so because they deem the policy impractical. Such perception may stem from what is seen in the teachers' responses in Q13 to Q18—that they do not feel they can do anything differently under this policy mandate. Responses in Q23, Q24, and Q25 may explain this perception as well, in that the teachers seem to take a somewhat neutral stance on these three statements:

Q23 *My role(s) as stated in Q9 (or lack thereof) allow me to implement these policies in order to achieve their objectives.*

This statement receives a mean of 3.38 and T2B of 26 (41%).

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Table 25

Teachers' overall perception and/or opinion of the policy (n = 63)

Statement	Mean	Top 2 boxes n	Top 2 boxes %
Q19 The objectives of these policies are reasonable.	3.49	35	56
Q20 The objectives of these policies are achievable.	3.00	21	33
Q21 It is possible to put the statements/requirements in these policies into real use.	3.51	35	56
Q22 It is practical to put the statements/requirements in these policies into real use.	3.22	26	41
Q23 My role(s) as stated in Q9 (or lack thereof) allow me to implement these policies in order to achieve their objectives.	3.38	26	41
Q24 My institutional culture/environment allows me to implement these policies in order to achieve their objectives.	3.48	33	52
Q25 My compulsory English classroom context allows me to implement these policies in order to achieve their objectives.	3.43	31	49
Q26 I agree with the statements and requirements in these policies.	3.49	32	51

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Q24 *My institutional culture/environment allows me to implement these policies in order to achieve their objectives.*
This statement receives a mean of 3.48 and T2B of 33 (52%).

Q25 *My compulsory English classroom context allows me to implement these policies in order to achieve their objectives.*
This statement receives a mean of 3.43 and T2B of 31 (49%).

This could elaborate further why teachers may not feel that they can do anything differently, as their roles (or lack thereof), their institutional culture/environment, and their classroom context do not seem to allow them to put the policy into practice that would eventually lead to an achievement of the policy objectives. In addition, the teachers also seem neutral, or if anything only slightly agree, with the statement in Q26 *I agree with the statements and requirements in these policies.* (Mean 3.49; T2B 32, 51%), indicating that the teachers do not seem to find the policy that convincing in overall.

Hence, for the teachers in this study, the policy statements and objectives are not something upon which they have a completely positive perception and opinion (Q26). They neither feel that the policy objectives are achievable (Q20), nor the statements/requirements practical to put into real use in the classroom (Q22). This, coupled with the limitation of the teachers' own roles as well as of the institutional and classroom contexts (Q23, Q24, and Q25), makes the teachers feel that they cannot do things any differently. Such perception and opinion seen through responses in this set of statements (Q19–Q26) could also be the explanation for the teachers' responses in the previous set of statements (Q13–Q18), as to why even though the teachers perceive the policy to be of some benefits to their teaching context, they do not feel enabled or empowered to make a difference in their practice.

4.2.2 Qualitative data results

4.2.2.1 Source of awareness and understanding of policy

Even though questions regarding the source of awareness and understanding of the policy was asked in the questionnaire survey, it was further probed in the interview for more detailed explanation. In fact, there were quite a few instances that such an explanation came up spontaneously without the researcher having to prompt for responses. It was found that how teachers learned about the policy affects their understanding—and, consequently, their interpretation—of the policy texts. In some cases, the teachers received pre-interpreted messages, and not much further interpretation needed to be done on their part. In other cases, however, the teachers were left to interpret the policy on their own, if not also to seek the knowledge of the policy by themselves. Therefore, interpretation of the policy texts varies greatly among teachers.

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With regard to the matter of policy interpretation, Miranda[6] is perhaps among the more fortunate ones. The management of her institution is knowledgeable about the policy and provides seminars on it; her Thai colleagues also help her understand the policy texts; and she herself is studious in keeping abreast with policy news. Thus, she is comfortable with applying the policy into her practice, as her interview excerpt illustrates:

> *It was very helpful that one of our first deans of my faculty, she's one of those who was working on [the policy]…and I attended her seminar, so I learned a lot from her…If I have an opportunity, I try to attend any seminar I could…I didn't know anything about CEFR when I came to Thailand. I just learned from my colleagues, you know, my Thai colleagues…I like to read the newspapers, too, like, read about education policies and stuff. (Miranda, Outer Circle, public institution)*

It seems that the management's knowledge, understanding, and attitude toward the policy play a big part in whether or not the teachers would welcome the policy message from their superior and feel comfortable applying the policy into their practice. Still, this is not the case of teachers blindly following the policy mandate. In contrast, teachers whose management has good knowledge and understanding of, and a positive attitude toward, the policy tend to have realistic perspectives on the achievement of policy objectives and try to make the policy work to the benefit of their teaching context. Thus, they do not fret over the achievement of the policy goals. An example can be seen from the following excerpt:

> *We're fortunate that our management is quite open-minded and knows about the CEFR even before the policy came out. So, with this policy, we talk about how we could use it to set standard for our graduates; otherwise, we wouldn't know where they stand [in terms of English proficiency] when they leave our institution. So, we use it to set the minimum proficiency level for graduating students. We all talk—university-level policy makers, curriculum developers, management teams, and teachers—to come up with the agreed minimum level, and we all look at things as they are in reality. We won't set goals that look*

[6] See Table 10 for the profile of the 26 teachers whose interviews are reported in this dissertation.

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pretty on paper but can't be reached in the end…because we look at many factors—the students as well as the learning time…So, we take those things [our context] into consideration and set institutional goals that we can realistically attain.

[Since the policy took effect] we have taken things more seriously in that we try to place the policy according to our institution's strategic roadmap—in terms of the development of students' English proficiency—how much this year, how much next year, how much the year after next. We apply the policy to the context of our institution, not that every student has to achieve B2 as strictly said in the policy. That level is too luxurious…The required level is too difficult for us to attain. So, we adapt. We use our own reality as a basis. (Kasem, Expanding Circle, private institution)

As found in responses of the questionnaire survey, self-initiation in seeking more policy knowledge is also reflected in the interview responses, and this is another important source of awareness and understanding of the policy. This self-initiation—a quality arguably stemming from and pertaining to lifelong learning, which will be discussed in the section to follow—seems to reside within teachers of any nationality, teaching in any context, and not limited only to those with supportive management. One teacher expressed his eagerness to learn about new policies and even considered applying new policies to his practice a motivation in teaching:

*For me, my motivation is, I like to apply what I learned. Then, I keep learning—learning through attending conferences, seminars. So, when I hear [about] new policies, new methodologies, I'm very excited to apply it for [*sic*] the new group [of students] or new semester. (Greg, Inner Circle, private institution)*

4.2.2.2 Understanding and interpretation of policy

From the interview responses, it is striking to see the difference in levels of understanding and ways of interpretation of the policy texts among the 26 teachers. The characteristics of such understanding and interpretation can be grouped into two main categories—teachers' understanding of particular texts in the policy (policy

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texts) and teachers' interpretation of the overall policy. Each category is discussed below.

1. Teachers' understanding of the policy texts

Even though it was not an intention of the researcher to take on an "educator" role while doing the interview, the researcher deemed it necessary to ensure that the participating teachers had an accurate understanding of the policy texts in order to respond to the interview questions in an unbiased manner. Gauging the teachers' understanding of particular texts in the policy revealed the various levels of understanding—or misunderstanding—of the policy texts, whether the terminology used, the concepts discussed, or even the tables displayed.

1.1 Teachers were not aware of the policy and hence had no understanding of the text

As seen from the responses in the questionnaire survey (Q7), not all participating teachers are aware of the policy. Some had heard of only the National Education Plan, some only the policy to upgrade English proficiency standards, and some neither. The main reason for this lack of awareness is the lack of communication within the institution. Thus, before asking policy-related questions, the researcher would confirm with the teachers whether they knew of the policy in focus of the study. If the teachers were not aware of any of the policy documents, the researcher let them read the excerpt, which was an attachment to the questionnaire survey, and explained the text(s) in detail before proceeding to the interview questions.

1.2 Teachers were aware of the policy but did not understand the text

It was not always the case that teachers who were aware of the policy would accurately understand the policy texts. Ten of the 26 teachers from the selected interviews expressed their concerns that the wording used in the policy texts is unclear and subject to interpretation of the readers or that the texts lack details of what teachers should do to achieve the policy goals. Even teachers who did not directly express their concerns on the wording of the policy showed, through their interview responses, that understanding and interpretation of the policy texts could be a problematic matter.

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The most common issue regarding understanding and interpretation of the policy texts seems to stem from comprehension at the word level. What was troubling to the teachers was the terminology or wording that is too broad in meaning. At the surface, such terminology or wording may signal the teachers to take certain actions. However, without further detail or explanation on what the terminology or wording exactly means, actions simply cannot be taken. The following excerpts illustrate the sentiment of four teachers on this particular issue:

> [Referring to Clause 3 of the Policy to upgrade English Proficiency standards: Higher education institutions are to adjust their English language curricula and pedagogy so as to achieve their institutional goals]
> *[A]chieve institutional goals, you know, what does that mean? That doesn't mean anything. (Timothy, Inner Circle, private institution)*
>
> *The Thai education has always had for a very long time, you know, for 100 years, some form of policy regarding English education. But this wording here is just broad and general. I mean, so this particular thing here, no, the only thing that's more specific here is about the European framework, right? (Henry, Inner Circle, public institution)*
>
> *And then there's mention of extracurricular activities, media, and environment, but I can't really say what they're actually talking about. I have no idea. It's just jargon to me…I would like to maybe see a document that takes this generalized advice and maybe what's the guide? What's the teacher's book version of this? Something more actionable. (Mathias, Inner Circle, public institution)*
>
> *The language in the policy is vague, unclear, and hard to grasp. After reading it you realize it's not a guideline. A guideline must tell you how to do certain things. This is like, the institution should develop…but how to develop? So, for teachers, when we hear this, we don't know what to do, what we must do. Yes, we need to develop a curriculum. But how?…If they want teachers to follow the policy, but we teachers don't know what to do, then we can't do it. And so,*

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the students have not yet benefited from the policy. But if we can do it, the students will certainly benefit from it…We must do more, but we don't know what to do. (Ganda, Expanding Circle, public institution)

It is worth noting how, from the fourth excerpt, Ganda expressed concerns beyond herself. She was worried not only about the fact that she herself did not understand the policy clearly and hence could not act accordingly, but she was also worried that, as a result, students would not receive the benefit intended by the policy. This signals that the concern is not simply about the frustration of not understanding the guideline, but also about the consequence of not understanding it and not being able to act upon it.

Responses from the interview also show that (mis)interpretation of the policy texts may not stem from teachers not understanding the terms used in the text but, rather, from their understanding of such terms used in a different context. This is especially prevalent in teachers whose background is non-education. The below excerpt comes from an interview with Nigel, who worked in the software industry before coming into English language teaching. He discussed with the researcher a possible interpretation of the term "digital literacy" and realized he might have interpreted it differently from what is intended by those who wrote the policy:

Maybe I'm confusing digital literacy with digital competence? Of course, literacy…is understanding how to read technology. Perhaps I'm coming at it with my digital competency past…Yeah, this is probably my mistake of interpretation. My background is technical. But from a language perspective, literacy means understanding, yeah? Digital understanding…It's having the ability use technology. They're different. Not to create technology but to use it…It's what literacy means, right? Using an app, which is often [in] English. (Nigel, Inner Circle, private institution)

As illustrated by the above excerpts, terminology or wording used in the policy is indeed subject to interpretation of the readers. A few teachers directly expressed how interpretation of such terminology or wording in the policy could be a problematic issue. One of them, Kasem, stated how problems in interpretation could lead to confusion regarding the intention and severity of the policy. He gave an example regarding the policy effective date, as follows:

> *We need to interpret which academic year to start. The policy says starting from academic year 2559 B.E. Does it mean effective for students who enter in 2559 or graduate in 2559? Which one should we use? It's unclear to us…Because the policy text is open to this kind of interpretation, I think the government is not able to and is not supposed to be strict about it. (Kasem, Expanding Circle, private institution)*

So, in Kasem's view, the policy supposedly could not and should not be strictly or severely imposed, because even its effective date was unclear or left to the implementers to decide by themselves. Another teacher, Albert, did not express concerns regarding the interpretation of the policy, but his interpretation could be of grave concerns to the policy makers. Albert did not feel pressured to either change his way of teaching or push his students toward achieving the policy objectives. His reason for this was that the policy spans a period of 20 years, and no teachers would see the same group of students for that long:

> *You know, it's a 20-year plan…No, I don't think it's pressuring teachers. I think most teachers don't see a group of students and say these are the students I will have for the next 20 years…I don't think there's any pressure for a teacher to say, okay, well, I've got to get this student from a beginner to an expert over the next 20 years…I think it's not an objective that individual teachers need to worry about. It's more of a policy maker's problem. (Albert, Inner Circle, public institution)*

What Albert meant is that, to get the students' proficiency level to C1 by the end of the policy term—or merely to B2 upon graduation—is not the responsibility of any one particular teacher, as students would move on to the next English class and meet a different teacher every semester. Thus, he did not feel that the policy is particularly relevant to him or any other teachers.

Besides specific terminology or wording, problems with understanding the policy texts also stem from the content of the policy, particularly the CEFR. There are

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quite a few teachers who were informed of the CEFR levels merely at face value—e.g., that the National Education Plan stipulates that bachelor's degree students must achieve a "B2" by graduation—but were essentially left clueless of what the levels actually mean—e.g., what constitutes a B2 proficiency level. For these teachers, they understood the general concept of the CEFR being a "guideline" for different proficiency levels represented by letters A, B, and C, and that the Ministry of Education has adopted this European guideline for use in English language education in Thailand. However, when it comes to specific details, these teachers were at a loss. Some did not know what it means by A1 or B2, while others misunderstood that the CEFR level is comparable to the grading system, thus A is higher than B and C. Below is an excerpt from an interview that showcases the latter type of misunderstanding:

Participant *These levels, are they, "A" I assume is the higher level?*

Researcher *No, actually "A" is the lowest.*

Participant *Oh, "C" is the higher? Oh, I think they should have placed that differently. I mean, they should have turned it differently [in line with the grading system]. "A" is the best. (Zenith, Outer Circle, public institution)*

Another element of the policy texts that confuses the participants is how the content is displayed. For instance, Albert, an Inner Circle teacher from a public institution, had difficulty reading and comprehending the table that stipulates the required English proficiency level upon graduation. The table is reproduced with translation in this dissertation as Figure 4, but the format is kept as appeared in the policy document. There were two aspects of this table that Albert did not understand. The first aspect is the year heading—such as "Years 1–5"—which Albert read as number of years that the students have studied English. However, the actual meaning is the period of time while the policy is in effect. That is, "Years 1–5" means the first

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Figure 4

Reproduction and translation of Table 14 in the National Education Plan

Table 14 Key performance indicators for the goals of the National Education Plan

Key performance indicator (quality of education)	Current	Years 1–5	Years 6–10	Years 11–15	Years 16–20
5) Increase in the average English proficiency level of graduates of different education levels when measured against the CEFR (junior secondary education [*matthayom ton*] / senior secondary education [*matthayom plai*] / higher education [bachelor's degree equivalent])	A1/A2/B2	A1/A2/B2	A2/B1/B2+	B1/B1+/C1	B2/B2/C1+

to the fifth year of the policy's 20-year span. The second aspect is how the required proficiency levels are written—such as "A1/A2/B2"—which left Albert confused as to what it means or how it should be read.

1.3 Teachers were aware of the policy, understood the text, but could not grasp the intended meaning of such text

There were also cases in which the teachers were aware of the policy and understood the text. However, they did not understand the intended meaning of such text. Therefore, various interpretations of the same text emerged. An example of such a case can be seen from responses of Nigel and Timothy, two Inner Circle teachers from two different private institutions, who commented on the aspects of digital literacy and media, as follows:

Source   Chapter 6: Key drivers for the National Education Plan

Location   Table 18: Action plan for each department and sub-division in order to drive Strategy 2

Policy text   Develop English language skills and digital literacy of students

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What jumped out at me in this written document, which I've never had confirmed, is the way they combine English language skills and digital literacy. I was always confused, as a language teacher, why we need to promote digital literacy…Maybe I'm confusing digital literacy with digital competence?...

Some students last week they questioned. They said, Ajarn, we don't know anything about the web. We don't know how to design a web page. And I said, well, you need to. I said, you have a point. As an English teacher, I agree with you. I'm here as an English language instructor to teach you the language not to teach you technical skills. [Students pleaded] But can we do it written, not online? I said, no, you have to follow the syllabus. You have to do it online. Send me the URL link to your online blog. [Students continued to plead] Ajarn, I don't know web design. I said, well, nor do I. But you know, they have to follow the syllabus, and this is to promote digital understanding and literacy and ability. (Nigel, Inner Circle, private institution)

Source	The policy to upgrade English Proficiency standards of higher education graduates
Location	Clause 4
Policy text	Higher education institutions are to develop extracurricular activities, processes, media, and/or environment that are conducive to learning and using English and, eventually, to improving students' English language proficiency level

That's what we're doing anyway…I think those are also in place, we fine tune to make them better…Let's see…Develop extracurricular activities, processes, media…Yeah, we use the iTunes U and make materials available online. We've got all that. So, that's done. We give the students iPads. We're on iPad universe, an i-hybrid university…Generally, we can argue that we're doing that already. (Timothy, Inner Circle, private institution)

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For Nigel, he understood that, according to the policy, he had to do something that promoted digital literacy in students, so he included in his assignments blogging and web design. However, even he himself was unsure whether his understanding and interpretation of “digital literacy” was accurate as per policy intention because, as he mentioned, no one had ever clarified this term with him. He was left to make an interpretation of—and assignments on—digital literacy all by himself. As for Timothy, he seemed to shallowly equate development of “media” to promote learning and using English with uploading class materials into iTunes U online application and giving students an iPad to access such application and class materials. This is because, as with Nigel, Timothy was left to interpret the policy on his own, and the fact that his institution put such an investment on the development of these “media” could have signaled—even confirmed—the legitimacy of his interpretation.

2. Teachers’ interpretation of the overall policy

With regard to gauging the teachers’ interpretation of the overall policy, the researcher did not take on an educator role and did not attempt to explain or rationalize the policy to the teachers. This is because, in such instances, most teachers already had accurate understanding of the policy texts—for example, they understood that CEFR level A1 is lower than C1, or that the policy aims at having higher education graduates attain a CEFR B2 level within the first five years of policy implementation. However, despite the good grasp of the policy texts, policy interpretation still varied among the teachers. Such variation seems to be due to teachers’ individual perception and attitude toward the policy, which determines, for instance, whether or not teachers interpret the policy as being a threat to their practice. The detail of teachers’ interpretation of the overall policy is discussed below.

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2.1 Positive interpretation of policy

It is remarkable, and unlike what the researcher has found in the literature, that all 26 teachers in the selected interview responses displayed a certain level of positive interpretation of the policy. Even those who were critical of policy implementation or skeptical of policy achievement saw some “pros” of the policy for English language teachers as well as for the students. The pros of the policy, accompanied by interview excerpts that illustrate such pros, are as follows:

a) Policy gives English language teachers guidelines, standards, or goals to aim for
Of all the 26 teachers who saw the pros of the policy, 17 mentioned the benefit of having the policy as a guideline. In their view, the policy gives both teachers and students a benchmark or objectives to work toward. If the students' performance is not on par with the policy requirement, the teachers can make pedagogical adjustment to help the students improve. At the same time, the policy provides a benchmark for students as well, in that students can understand what it means to be at their current level of English language proficiency or ability, which level they should attain by graduation, and what they need to do to get there. Below are some interview excerpts that illustrate this point of view:

> *I love having the policy because it's a guideline for us to follow. I don't have any problem with that. It's like your baseline where you have to track down your progress and the students' progress as well…The guideline for me is important, that's good, because we have this target that you [can follow]…The policy assists as a guideline so that everybody will have the same target. But some of us will not be able to fully reach that target because they have a different ability. So, the policy is just there to act as a guide, not to standardize everything. That's what the benefit of this is. (Giselle, Outer Circle, private institution)*

> *Exit exam is going to implement [*sic*] here maybe next year…There is pressure, but actually we encourage the students to do the exit exam. Why? So, you will know your level, right? It's good for you. So, what do you think is the purpose of the exit exam? To check the level of the students, right? So, if the level of students doesn't reach the standard level, it means you have a problem with your strategy and methodology of teaching. It's good for you. It's good for the teachers. Good for the students, too. So, when you see the result, and you see it's lower than the standard, you have to change your tactic…The policy helps the teachers to change the way they teach or implement*

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techniques and strategies for the betterment of the students. It also gives the students the opportunity to experience changes. That's the pros about the policy that I know. (Greg, Outer Circle, private institution)

*For me, the pros of this policy is [*sic*] you get somewhat a direction on where you are going. That is the pros that you are being guided on how you're going to bring learning to the students, how can this learning be effective and be useful for the students. (Marcy, Outer Circle, public institution)*

For the students, I believe students feel that there are levels for them to attain, just like playing a game, especially if they understand the CEFR levels in detail. That would be interesting, too, because when we talked to Human Resources of [a Thailand office of an international company], they also know about the CEFR…It's now more tangible to the students…Students have more opportunity to know the level that they are currently at…They have more explanation [and not merely knowing their scores]. So, the policy does have benefits to the students. (Orapan, Expanding Circle, public institution)

One teacher also talked about how the policy serves well as a guideline for her teaching, because the way that she learned English as a student in her country was different from the way she needs to teach English as a teacher in Thailand:

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I think one of the positive things for me is that having this guide, like, I have something to build on or to work on…Because at first I thought, oh, I need to teach them [students] English. And we have our own ways in [participant's home country]. We don't really have this CEFR standard. I think it's quite different from the Thai system. So, when I came here, and I learned about the [Thai] policies, the education policy, I think the positive thing is I have something to work on…I have a guide. So, all this is the Thai context. So, I should not just think about, oh, this is how I learned English in [participant's home country] because it's different. (Miranda, Outer Circle, public institution) *b) Policy signals the importance of the English language and the goal for national development*

Five teachers indicated that, by having the policy, it signals that the government is committed to improving the English proficiency of its citizen. This in turn raises an awareness in all stakeholders in higher education institutions—the management, the teachers, and the students—that English is important. It also makes the students realize not only the academic consequences but also the real-world consequences of being skilled or unskilled in English. For teachers, this also means a commitment of resources that would support their teaching. The following interview excerpts illustrate this case in point:

> *The policy helps create awareness. If all universities do it, and not just for the sake of doing it, people will become aware of the importance of English…and take action. (Kasem, Expanding Circle, private institution)*

> *I think there's a good value for policies. There's a definite need for policies. Good in the sense that they set a direction, they set a vision, they set standards. And so, in a sense, if you can get the education of a nation on a certain track, then sure, I mean, why not? (Henry, Inner Circle, public institution)*

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> *The policy signals that there's a need to improve, that we see the importance of having kids in our country improve. I think it's good that there's a set goal, that we have to be at so-and-so level. Because if we are not there, we won't be able to compete with other countries. So, the pro is that there's a goal. At least we have a target of what and where we need to be. I think the policy makers must have seen this point—that others have gone far ahead of us, so we need to get there, too. (Lalipa, Expanding Circle, private institution)*

> *Indirectly, all students, their advisors, and the academic departments now know that the university is putting more attention on the importance of English. We found that in many faculty meetings, the committees from different colleges try to adjust their curriculum by incorporating English into*

their requirements…I think that's a pro. It may not be implemented 100%, but from an optimistic viewpoint, it's good. It gives direction to those who have no idea how English has been taught [in the university]. (Orapan, Expanding Circle, public institution)

[The students] are realizing this now—the importance of how it [English] has real-world consequences. So…the fact that they recognize that, I think, is good. To me, it's the most important benefit…

The good thing, obviously, is that the government supports English and the importance of English in the curriculum. So, I think that's the most important thing, that they'll never—I've got job security. They're never going to say that English is not an important language…Then also to have the policy, which does have some guidelines of what the objectives are, even if they're a bit general, but again, it's there. You know, it's there, and there's the support. So, if ever they [the management] try to pull the support away, you could remind them, like, excuse me, but this is the policy, so you've got to back that up with action. (Timothy, Inner Circle, private institution)

c) Policy provides teachers with direction for a more focused and consistent curriculum making

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Several teachers also expressed that the policy helps set out direction for a focused and consistent curriculum making. Some mentioned the fact that the detail of the CEFR enhances the comprehensiveness of curriculum or course design. Others mentioned that having all teachers teaching and testing on the same materials not only saves time but also aids in communication and collaboration among teachers of the same course, as all teachers are on the same page. There is also the benefit of having fairness in assessment, as there is uniformity in both teaching and assessing the students. The interview excerpts below illustrate these points:

I think the framework that this policy provides can readily translate into a syllabus. I think from a course coordinator role, and I am course coordinator on two courses, in the meetings we have, which sometimes highlight these requirements, National Education Plan. They don't explicitly state them, but *they can sometimes reference them indirectly. I think that framework can translate quite readily into some sort of syllabus, giving the syllabus some sort of direction…The Plan, if you like, can lend itself to produce a more focused syllabus. (Nigel, Inner Circle, private institution)*

The pro is that it makes teaching more effective. We can integrate all skills. If we use the CEFR to design the course syllabus and use it as a target—because the CEFR details what students must be able to do at a certain proficiency level of a specific skill, like, what a student of a B level in listening must be able to do—it will help us teachers not to overlook or miss the necessary skills. We will try to find activities to build those skills, which make our teaching more focused and more effective.

The pro is students will get to learn all English language skills…Because if we don't have the CEFR as a basis, teachers will just teach in whatever way they want, in their own style, and [as a result] I've seen students with 100% perfect grammar in writing but cannot speak a word. But with CEFR, it provides detail [for all skills]. Say for speaking, it tells you what you must be able to speak if you are going to pass for a B2. So, this will help students to develop all four language skills (Jate, Expanding Circle, public institution)

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The pro for the teachers is we used to have to try to design our own syllabus, and that would take a long time, and we would have to do a lot of research…And so, the good point is we don't have to do any of that anymore, because it's all set. We're all doing exactly the same thing…It's not a great pro, but it's a pro. It's time saving for the teachers. And it's easier for us if we want to talk about something, then we can go to head teacher or any of the other teachers and say, how did you do this?…I was doing this, what were you doing? So, we're able to get on the same level as far as what we're doing. Whereas, before, we were doing totally different things that we couldn't match. We couldn't help each other…So, there's a uniformity…And if you have to do some assessment, that's necessary…it's very fair to the students…It *might not be the best way to do it, but it is the fair way to do it…So, we can do more honest assessment. (Mitch, Inner Circle, private institution)*

So, what's the effect of the policy? Is there an effect? Yes, because it will solidify our methods, our techniques, our strategies. So, it doesn't contradict with [our experience]. (Greg, Outer Circle, private institution)

The findings discussed above are different from what the researcher found in the literature, where the "positives" are seen at the level of policy concept (e.g., that a policy promoting teacher agency is seen as a good thing—as Priestley et al. (2015) mentioned the come-back of the concept of teacher agency in Scotland's Curriculum for Excellence). However, such positives are hardly seen at the policy implementation level (e.g., that stipulating a required achievement level is a good thing). The fact that teachers in this study also see the good of the policy is indeed in stark contrast with mostly-negative sentiments seen in the literature review.

2.2 Negative interpretation of policy

Despite the positives discussed above, the policy does induce negative interpretation in the teachers, some of which were quite strong. These "cons" of the policy are, for the most part, the negative consequences of the policy on the teachers, which are almost always passed on to the students. Major concerns on the policy are as follows:

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a) Policy is dumped on to the teachers with no clear direction for implementation

As discussed in the earlier section, the most common negative sentiment toward the policy was that its texts lack clarity. However, what troubled the teachers more was the fact that they were left to their own devices when it came to the task of interpreting the policy and implementing it, as one teacher commented:

[T]he drawbacks are simply that they don't have an overarching scheme, as far as that they don't see the education from beginning to end. And they [the policy makers] want, they seem to be able to have the policy, but then kind of hand it off and hope everyone else can figure out how to do it…It doesn't have

a lot of specifics…[It] doesn't really have any way how we're going to achieve that. (Timothy, Inner Circle, private institution)

b) Policy makers do not understand the actual teaching context and do not involve front-line implementers, resulting in unattainable, unrealistic, and irrelevant policy
Besides lack of clarity and direction, the second most common concern was the fact that the policy was drafted by policy makers who are unlikely to have seen the real situation of the nation's education system. To make matters worse, the drafting process neither involved teachers, who are the true front-liners in implementing the policy and facing its consequences, nor incorporated teachers' voices. This thus results in a policy that the teachers perceived as unattainable, unrealistic, and at times irrelevant. Some interview excerpts below illustrate this concern:

*It's that sometimes, you know, their [the policy makers'] policy is based on what they perceive to be ends, and it's kind of a top-*down implementation. *They don't come to us and say, what are you dealing with? We want to have a policy of English, what can we achieve? So, their goals and their achievability are kind of, maybe, slightly at odds. They need to go back to the early stages first and have a policy which encompasses a whole pedagogy from cradle to grave. (Timothy, Inner Circle, private institution)*

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Sometimes, if the administrator or the policy makers don't understand education, the real education, they will just implement policies—follow this, follow this, follow this—without giving the process. How are you going to teach these? They just care about the policies they implement, which is only the top of the, just the frosting on the cake. (Greg, Outer Circle, private institution)

There are some policies that are unrealistic. That's the reality of it. Some of these policy makers, they are not in the classroom. (Giselle, Outer Circle, private institution)

For me, some of these are just very idealistic. Dreams, very big dreams. Which are good. We want to improve, we want to achieve something, but it should be realistic. It should be up to that level of being realistic, so that at the end of the day, we don't point fingers at each other. It's you. It's you. It's you…We should hold hands if we want to achieve this. Hold hands and not point fingers. (Marcy, Outer Circle, public institution)

I think we should get rid of the standards, charts, especially this European framework. We don't need to have students trying to do this. They're not going to get there yet. They're a long way from that Common European Framework levels, the intermediate levels and definitions of these levels. They're just not there. And so, we put a lot of pressure on them to try to do something they're not prepared for when we should just be working on their communicative abilities. (Mitch, Inner Circle, private institution)

An Inner Circle teacher from a public institution talked about how a one-size-fits-all policy is not practical and not relevant to all teachers. A policy needs to be well thought of, from design to implementation:

The problem with policies is…they don't apply to the vast variety of types of schools in the nation for a start. And, very importantly, they're very often designed by people who've got no real educational experience…[Policies] would be good if they could be cleverly designed, realistically designed, and long-term implemented with adaptation, in fact, doing it properly…So, you know, policies, it's like a mission statement. If you're getting people on board with an idea, then that's good. But if it's not realistically designed and realistically implemented, then, of course, it's not going to work. It's not going to be relevant for the vast majority of teachers. (Henry, Inner Circle, public institution)

Henry also mentioned another result of having a policy designed by people who do not see the actual context—that the policy tends to be "out of touch with reality"—as he suggested:

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The ambitions of those policies are completely out of touch with reality, you know, in the sense that, yes, you have wealthy educated kids who could probably comply with the requirements of the policy. But then you've got millions of kids in the rest of the country, and you've got very bad schools or background. (Henry, Inner Circle, public institution)

c) Lack of clarity and direction, coupled with unreasonable requirements, lead to problems of implementation

The lack of clarity in the policy direction and interpretation, coupled with requirements that are deemed unattainable, unrealistic, and irrelevant, leads to problematic issues in policy implementation. Some teachers mentioned that, while having a policy as an umbrella guideline can be good in theory, there is not really a "pro" when it comes to actual implementation. Some teachers had already tried incorporating—or, more aptly, been required to incorporate—the policy into their practice but met with difficulties when it was put into actual use, as the below interview excerpt illustrates:

[This teacher mentioned that the policy, using CEFR as the framework, serves as a good guideline for a more comprehensive course or lesson design.] *The cons are that it's a waste of time, and we can't apply it to our teaching context. We spend time designing a new course [based on the policy], but it's all in vain because we can't really teach it due to several contextual reasons like large class size, passive learning style of the students, and classroom arrangement—tables in our classrooms are arranged in lecture style. So, it's not practical to do activities in there. (Jate, Expanding Circle, public institution)*

Another teacher mentioned how the policy was "a big deal" in her institution, leading to multiple inter-departmental and inter-major meetings to discuss how English courses should be arranged and taught. The management team in fact agreed that students need to be grouped according to their proficiency levels, as opposed to according to majors. However, this course section arrangement conflicted with schedules of instructors of other major-content courses. Therefore, not only that the proposed new English section arrangement did not take shape, but it also created tension within the institution, as the following excerpt illustrates:

> *Associate deans of all majors were called to meetings. It was a big deal, with big arguments, and ended up in a big disaster—three rounds like this, already. The management actually saw the importance of reorganizing English class sections and wanted to push for the government policy. But the operating staff disagreed. Up until now we still can't go forward. (Fasai, Expanding Circle, public institution)*

d) Policy creates concerns and pressure on attainability and achievement

In addition to the positives and negatives, teachers also commented on the practicality, feasibility, and achievability of the policy. A prominent comment gleaned from the interview is the fact that many teachers deem the policy not practical or not achievable unless certain conditions are met. For example, Timothy, an Inner Circle teacher from a private institution, believed that teachers in general, himself included, have the "motivation to do a good job" and "want to support [their] university…and the goals that they have" but also that "I think we all agree it's a hopeless task to achieve." However, Timothy did not simply complain but suggested a "cradle-to-grave" solution on what he believed should be done if the policy is to be attainable—by, for a start, encouraging more people to become English teachers, giving English teachers more incentives to stay in the profession, and improving the quality of English teachers, while at the same time also engaging parents to incorporate English into the daily routines at home, such as doing story-telling in English.

There are also teachers who viewed that the policy is in fact achievable but at the moment impractical, a finding that is in line with responses in the questionnaire survey. For instance, teachers from all circles and all types of institution seemed to agree that pushing students to graduate with a CEFR B2 level might be achievable, but not within merely four years of the undergraduate program and not without a lot of pressure being put on the students, especially those whose English proficiency is low, or very low, when they first enter their respective higher education institution. One Inner Circle teacher from a private institution, Mitch, commented that the policy puts too much emphasis on tests—whether end-of-the-semester tests or an exit

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exam—for the fact they provide both institution's management and the government with "evidence" of students' proficiency. This in turn puts heavy workload and high level of stress on the teachers and on the students as a result.

Thus, some teachers suggested an alternative. For instance, Fasai suggested that the policy should aim for an increase in proficiency level from day one up to graduation—e.g., from A1 at day of entry up two levels to B1 at day of departure—rather than an attainment of a specific level measured only at the end. In order to do this, Fasai, along with her colleagues in the department, believed that one structural limitation in her institution must be lifted—that is, to arrange sections of English classes according to proficiency level rather than by academic major of students. However, as illustrated in the interview excerpt above, such an attempt had failed three times in her institution because, even though the management agreed with the concept, the working-level teams could not find agreement in practice, such as working out a feasible timetable for lecturers of all academic majors. Fasai's suggestion of doing a before-and-after measurement is echoed by Seth:

> *I think it's not about reaching a certain level. I think it's about showing a certain level of improvement from when they come in till when they leave. So, you could take a test when they started. And they have to reach a certain percentage above that amount by the time they leave. Maybe that would be more realistic than saying everyone should have 600 TOEIC, or something like this. I think some students wouldn't, they would never get it. And it would not be fair. They could be very bright students, just not good at English. I think it's an individual basis rather than set one level. (Seth, Inner Circle, public institution)*

Seth's view—also echoed by some other teachers—while supportive of a policy that intends to enhance English language teaching and learning in Thailand, revealed his reservations about too much focus being put on English scores. Seth and the other teachers pointed out the fact that students who cannot achieve the level required by the policy by graduation or cannot pass the English language exit exam are not necessarily bad students who do not deserve to graduate. These students may be weak in English but strong in their major area of study. Other factors may as well

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be at play—perhaps the students are ill during the exam week, or perhaps they are simply nervous while taking the test.

Seth even went further to suggest that too much focus on English scores could potentially and unreasonably "rob gifted students a place in the university" before they even set foot on campus. So, the problem is not merely at graduation but also at enrollment, as the following excerpt illustrates:

> *It's a good idea that they want students in Thailand to be graduating with a high, certain level of English. But, if you have a policy like this, it might limit some students' access to go into university. Because if all students have to be at certain level of English, some students may be really good at a certain topic and field, if you have a standard like this for university, not taking into consideration how good he [a student] is at other things, only in English, he might be rejected to go to university because of his English…So, I don't think a policy [setting] a certain level of English for universities is the right thing, because it would, could, rob gifted students a place in the university. (Seth, Inner Circle, public institution)*

Another concern voiced by the teachers is how much and how far the policy can be achieved. This is considered in terms of achievement per the time period of the policy as well as in terms of achievement per national coverage, as Albert pointed out:

> *I certainly think the early stages from, you know, complete beginner to pre-intermediate or intermediate level is achievable. But after that point, I think the objectives for the last five years, like 16 to 20, would be much more difficult to achieve, and specifically if we're talking about every member of the public, at all levels. (Albert, Inner Circle, public institution)*

Too much focus on scores and proficiency level could also negatively affect students' motivation and learning. As Albedo, an Outer Circle teacher from a private institution, said, "[We are using] too much heads and not enough hearts," because teachers are pressured to achieve the policy goals and pass the pressure down to the students, forcing them to do what they are not ready for:

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But because we have the standard to follow, we keep on pushing them [the students]. And sometimes we look at them, like, how can you not produce? We've been teaching you already. [And the students are] like, teacher, look at me, I need some help…So, that's the thing…The only thing that is missing is, you know, the heart, the human aspect. Because we keep pushing our students to produce something without knowing their needs, knowing their wants… Maybe if they are healed inside, maybe they could produce more. Because they know that they're supported…We have the pressure [from the policy], and we put the pressure to our students…So, where's the heart in there?…But there's the pressure…I mean, I would be lying if there's no pressure to me. (Albedo, Outer Circle, private institution)

The result is, as Jate, an Expanding Circle teacher from a public institution, put it, the students would lose the fun in learning, and having more pressure would lead to demotivation. Alternatively, as Lalipa, an Expanding Circle teacher from a private institution put it, the students would become lethargic and do the bare minimum only to pass the course. In other cases, the students would lose the motivation when they are put in a class that is way above their level, especially if they see that other classmates are better than them, as Miranda explained:

Maybe they should not have the same English foundation in this class. Maybe they should have a specialized English class…Because it's difficult to go to a class where you don't understand anything at all, and then your other classmates are already good and then they can perform well. So, it makes the [weaker] students more demotivated. (Miranda, Outer Circle, public institution)

The danger of a policy making its stakeholders too reliant and too focused on scores and proficiency level was pointed out by Kasem, who eloquently summed up the consequence as follows:

If you are too focused on scores and levels, you deviate from the real intention of language education. (Kasem, Expanding Circle, private institution)

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e) Policy creates concerns on validity and fairness of assessment

Besides concerns about teaching and testing at the classroom level, matters regarding students' assessment on a larger scale and with more significant consequences were also raised. Many teachers questioned the validity of the exit exam scores, and for good reason. These teachers were aware that an increasing number of higher education institutions were developing or using in-house exit exam to measure the English proficiency of graduating students. They were also aware, and wary, of the fact that a B2 from one institution's exam may or may not be the same as a B2 from another institution's exam, as exemplified by Kasem's comment, "It's difficult to measure. Who's to say you achieve an 'A' level?" It was thus suggested that the issue of validity in assessing the students' English proficiency upon graduation be seriously addressed, or else the fairness of such assessment could be gravely compromised.

f) Policy as well as the framework on which it is based are not perceived as being relevant to the teaching context

While there were apparent concerns among the teachers with regard to the achievement of policy objectives, there were also teachers who did not feel that policy achievement was in fact relevant to them. This is in part due to how the teachers interpret the policy. For instance, as reported earlier, Albert felt that a 20-year period is too far removed and that no particular teacher would be responsible for a group of students for that long. Thus, the responsibility of improving students' English proficiency does not rest upon any particular teacher. Other teachers talked about how the policy is not relevant to the teaching context of institutions in smaller or more remote provinces. In addition, some teachers questioned the relevance of the CEFR to the Thai context—that it is a European framework being applied, perhaps not quite appropriately, to the context of Thai education:

> *There used to be some comments [in our meeting] that this is a European framework. It's not truly universal…And from my knowledge from attending trainings and seminars, the CEFR is not the only framework out there. There are other tests and frameworks that can tell you the proficiency level as well. (Kasem, Expanding Circle, private institution)*

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Another issue that makes the policy seem irrelevant to the teachers is that Thai education policy changes too often, hence teachers stop paying attention:

> *The policies change with every new minister…They [Ministry of Education] will come up with a new one [policy] every two years because a new minister wants to make the name for themselves. And so, everybody stops paying attention. (Henry, Inner Circle, public institution)*

The above findings, both from quantitative data and qualitative data, suggest that even a seemingly straightforward question—asking about teachers' awareness and understanding of the policy—could result in quite a complicated answer. The questionnaire survey shows that although almost half of the participating teachers are aware of both policy texts, as many as one-third are not aware of any. This also reflects in how teachers perceive what their role is or would be in implementing the policy in their teaching context. While approximately half of the teachers know their role is to be—whether voluntarily or not—a policy implementer in their classroom, over one-third do not know or are not sure what their role would be.

Responses from the interview reveal even more complex findings. First and foremost, it is found that understanding of the policy comes in many levels and many facets. Unsurprisingly, teachers who prior to being part of this research have no awareness of the policy do not possess any understanding of the policy texts. Even so, it is not always the case that teachers who are aware of the policy would have a good understanding of the policy texts, as many of them are confused by the terminology or how the information is presented in the policy. In many cases, the teachers reported that they are left to interpret the policy by themselves, which either frustrates them or leaves them clueless as to what they are supposed to do. Some also feel that they cannot follow the policy mandate to the benefit of their students. This is perhaps why, from the questionnaire survey, most teachers neither feel that they are empowered by the policy nor perceive that the policy is benefiting them professionally.

In terms of policy interpretation, it is worth noting that all 26 teachers from the selected interviews expressed positive views toward the policy, mostly in a sense that the policy serves as a guideline for various aspects of English language teaching and learning. Looking more broadly at responses from the questionnaire survey, however,

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this positivity seems to be tarred by the fact that the policy lacks specific details of what the teachers could and should do. Thus, many teachers feel that while the policy objectives may be reasonable, they do not feel that such objectives can be achieved, at least not at present or in the near future. Moreover, they also feel that although it may be possible to put the policy into practice in their teaching context, they are unlikely to do so because they deem the policy impractical.

4.3 Findings for research question 2

Research question 2: How do English teachers achieve agency in the classroom context, in light of the English language assessment policy?

4.3.1 Quantitative data results

Section 3 of the questionnaire survey asked the teachers about their individual attributes in relation to the policy. The questions in this section are divided into two sets. Questions 27 to 35 asked the teachers about their overall perception of the influence of policy on themselves, and questions 36 to 45 asked the teachers to compare situations in terms of whether there had been any changes in how they understood the policy as well as how they perceived themselves since the policy became effective in B.E. 2559 (2016 C.E.). As the objective of this section is to answer research questions 2 and 3, some questionnaire items in this section can provide answer to both research questions. However, the first set of questions, Q27–Q35, are more relevant to research question 2 in gauging the teachers’ perception on how and/or how much the policy helps or hinders the elements that would contribute to their achievement of agency. In contrast, the second set of questions, Q36–Q45, are more relevant to research question 3 in that they gear toward gauging the influence of the policy on the teachers through a “before vs. after” comparison. Therefore, the paragraphs below will mainly talk about results from Q27 to Q35, while results from Q36 to Q45 will be discussed in more detail in findings for research question 3. A summary of response for Q27 to Q35 is provided in Table 26.

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Table 26

Teachers' overall perception of influence of policy on self (n = 63)

Statement	Mean	Top 2 boxes	
		n	%
Q27 The policies provide me with clear objectives of English language teaching, learning, and assessment in higher education.	3.38	29	46
Q28 The policies provide me with clear guidelines of what I need to do to achieve the policies' objectives.	2.83	20	32
Q29 The policies enable and/or empower me to work toward achieving the policies' objectives.	3.06	21	33
Q30 The policies strengthen my beliefs in English language teaching, learning, and assessment.	3.00	24	38
Q31 The policies strengthen my identity as an English language teacher.	2.94	20	32
Q32 The policies strengthen my motivation in working as an English language teacher.	3.00	22	35
Q33 The policies strengthen my confidence in being an English language teacher.	2.89	18	29
Q34 The policies strengthen my sense of control over the environment of my compulsory English classroom.	2.81	18	29
Q35 The policies strengthen my sense of control over the work environment outside my compulsory English classroom (e.g., in my department or faculty).	2.73	13	21

Q27–Q35: Overall perception of influence of policy on self

In this section, T2B of all statements is less than 50%, indicating that teachers in this study lean toward disagreement with all statements in this set. Moreover, the mean of five out of nine statements—those of Q28, Q31, Q33, Q34, and Q35—fall below 3.00, further signifying the teachers' disagreement toward such statements. The responses for statements in Q27 to Q35 are reported below:

Q27 *The policies provide me with clear objectives of English language teaching, learning, and assessment in higher education*.
This statement receives a mean of 3.38 and T2B of 29 (46%).

Q28 *The policies provide me with clear guidelines of what I need to do to achieve the policies' objectives*.
This statement receives a mean of 2.83 and T2B of 20 (32%).

Q29 *The policies enable and/or empower me to work toward achieving the policies' objectives*.
This statement receives a mean of 3.06 and T2B of 21 (33%).

Q30 *The policies strengthen my beliefs in English language teaching, learning, and assessment*.
This statement receives a mean of 3.00 and T2B of 24 (38%).

Q31 *The policies strengthen my identity as an English language teacher*.
This statement receives a mean of 2.94 and T2B of 20 (32%).

Q32 *The policies strengthen my motivation in working as an English language teacher*.
This statement receives a mean of 3.00 and T2B of 22 (35%).

Q33 *The policies strengthen my confidence in being an English language teacher*.
This statement receives a mean of 2.89 and T2B of 18 (29%).

Q34 *The policies strengthen my sense of control over the environment of my compulsory English classroom*.
This statement receives a mean of 2.81 and T2B of 18 (29%).

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Q35 *The policies strengthen my sense of control over the work environment outside my compulsory English classroom (e.g., in my department or faculty).*
This statement receives a mean of 2.73 and T2B of 13 (21%).

The teachers' sentiment behind their responses for statements in Q28 and Q29 may be the source of the feeling that they reported in the section of Q13 to Q18—*Benefit(s) and/or disadvantage(s) of the policy in the teaching context of the teachers' selected compulsory English course*. That is, the teachers do not feel enabled or empowered, and that they do not think they can do anything differently, because they do not perceive that the policy provides them with clear guidelines of what they need to do to achieve the policy objectives (Q28) and that, in overall, the policy does not enable and/or empower them to work toward achieving such objectives (Q29). Moreover, the low T2B (< 50%) and mean (≤ 3.00) of statements in Q30 to Q35 indicate that the teachers do not feel that the policy has done anything to enhance their personal attributes—their beliefs, identity, motivation, confidence, and sense of control—of being an English language teacher.

The responses from this set of questions thus show that, in overall, the teachers in this study do not seem to perceive the policy to be helpful in their practice (Q27, Q28, and Q29), nor do they feel that their personal attributes of being an English language teacher are enhanced by the policy (Q30–Q35). It could be inferred from these responses that, in the context of their classroom and the mandated policy, the teachers may not be able to fully exercise their agency or achieve a high degree of it. However, because a questionnaire survey does not lend itself to much probing as to how or why certain responses are given, it is helpful, if not also necessary, to look at the interview responses in conjunction with the questionnaire responses. Indeed, as will be detailed in the sections below, the responses from the 26 selected interviews reveal that the situation is not entirely negative, and the teachers do have their own capacity and means to exercise and achieve certain degrees of agency in their respective context.

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4.3.2 Qualitative data results

Findings from the questionnaire survey may suggest that teachers in this study seem to perceive that the policy is neither helpful to their practice nor beneficial to their personal attributes of being an English language teacher—an indication of the policy neither contributing to nor enhancing teacher agency. However, it does not mean that the teachers were unable to exercise or achieve agency in their classroom context. Findings from the interview data, discussed below, will portray how the teachers handle the situations at hand, exercising and achieving varying degrees of agency even when it seems improbable to do so.

4.3.2.1 Achievement of teacher agency: How and how much

Quite a number of teachers from the interview voiced their concern on how the required English proficiency level would be difficult—and in some cases impossible—to attain within the period set by the policy. This is due to the fact that students' English proficiency level is low or very low when they enter their respective higher education institution. Some students struggle even with basic English. Thus, in the current period of policy implementation (2017–2021), reaching a CEFR B2 level upon graduation as stipulated in the policy would be quite a feat for both the students and the teachers. This concern is exemplified in the below excerpts:

> *You expect that the students will graduate with B2, but some of them came [to this university] with, don't even talk about A1, not even A1. Some of them that I've seen, they say "He am" and don't know how to spell. They just don't have the proficiency…You expect students with not even A1 upon entry to graduate with B2? Is that possible? (Fasai, Expanding Circle, public institution)*
>
> *The obstacle now is the [English] education at high school level. They can't develop the students up to the CEFR level required at the higher education level. What I mean is, the English proficiency level of the incoming students is very low…So, with this current policy, will we achieve its objective? Absolutely not. This is because of the quality of the students. (Jate, Expanding Circle, public institution)*

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I think we should get rid of the standards, charts, especially this European framework. We don't need to have students trying to do this. They're not going to get there yet. They're a long way from that Common European Framework levels, the intermediate levels, and definitions of these levels. They're just not there. And so, we put a lot of pressure on them to try to do something they're not prepared for when we should just be working on their communicative abilities. Most of them cannot make a simple sentence, actual sentence where verbs and subjects agree…These are just simple things they should have learned a long time ago, and they should have all that mastered by now. But they still struggle with that. So, they've got a long way to go. (Mitch, Inner Circle, private institution)

Demanding that undergraduate students graduate with B2…within four years. That's difficult. It creates pressure to the teachers and, subsequently, to the students. Because if they are at A1 [when they enter the university], and you want them to be at B2 within four years? No way. (Lalipa, Expanding Circle, private institution)

While such a concern on students' low English proficiency level may be similarly shared by the teachers, the exercise and achievement of teacher agency varies among them. Some teachers find it difficult to come up with activities or teaching materials when the proficiency level that the students currently have does not match the proficiency level that they need to have. This impedes both the teachers' exercise of agency and the students' responsiveness to learning. The following excerpts illustrate:

The university wants us to totally follow the policy…But with the nature of our students, we can't do what the policy requires…Because, in order to follow the required CEFR framework, students must be active, but Thai students are passive learners. I'm not saying this is not good. I'm just saying this is the nature of Thai students…So, it's difficult to do activities in the classroom. For example, the CEFR details the can-do statements for speaking. But when you do speaking activities, no one speaks up. Silence…So, I cannot do any

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activities in class. This is the problem that makes me unable to follow the CEFR policy…I have to continue teaching the old ways. (Jate, Expanding Circle, public institution)

[T]he policy does not fit…the students' abilities, their level, their interest. I mean, not the policy itself, but to be able to carry out the policy, you cannot come up with activities, lessons, etc., wherein the students would think that it's for them, that they can relate to it. [Researcher: So, you think that's why, as you mentioned earlier, they're not responsive to the learning?] Yes. Because we cannot really address their abilities, their level, their needs, their interest. (Marcy, Outer Circle, public institution)

Marcy, along with a few other teachers, also expressed how the policy is limiting what teachers can or cannot do in the classroom. In fact, one Inner Circle teacher from a private institution said that, because of the policy, "teachers are reduced to a checklist." The interview excerpts below also show similar viewpoints:

Sometimes you are put in a box, that the policy somewhat limits you in some ways that you cannot do this, you can only do this…I hope it will be more open that we, lecturers like us, will be free, more free, to achieve things in our own way and not through [what the policy requires teachers to do]…Why should we not be allowed to do what we believe? (Marcy, Outer Circle, public institution)

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Also, some of the conversations that we have in the meeting, why do we have to do that? Those things are not beneficial for the students. They don't need it. But we have to do it. Why? So, I asked that question. Because we are bound by the policy. We are bound to whatever regulations that higher education, or the Minister of Education, or the university is asking us to do. (Giselle, Outer Circle, private institution)

I guess many policies leave teachers feeling that they have no agency…When universities have to introduce new policies from the national level, and the *teachers get told, the teachers just feel, once again, that they're having their agency removed from them, like, oh, now I have to do this, now I have to do this. And it's the idea of, don't you trust that I can do my job? I can do my job. And policies often seem to imply that you're not doing your job properly. (Henry, Inner Circle, public institution)*

Yet, quite a number of teachers do exercise their agency in different ways and at different degrees. The exercise of agency mostly comes through teachers customizing or adjusting their lessons based on the students' English proficiency level. The interesting point here is that, whether or not the teachers are allowed, or feel that they are allowed, to do such customization or adjustment, they would find ways to do so because they believe that it is for the good of their students.

For example, Marcy, who, from the interview excerpts above, finds the policy to be limiting her agency, said that she adapts her lessons to meet the actual needs of the students. She does so despite the fact that she would need to explain herself to the management, because it is preferred that all teachers in the department follow the syllabus strictly in order to cover the materials that, it is believed, would help meet the policy requirement. An excerpt from Marcy's comment on this matter is as follows:

[I gear toward] what the students actually need…I don't totally agree with the policy, you know. So, I try to achieve the achievable ones stated in the policy, but I gear more on the practical use for the students.

What I always have in mind is the good of my students. So, I don't care if I don't finish the curriculum…I'll just be ready to face and explain it to whoever I need to explain it. But I'm more on what is achievable, and what is good for my students…because I don't think that learning is being able to finish five chapters, as is written in the [syllabus]. I don't believe that is learning.

But facing your class [knowing] this is only what they can do. This is what they are able to finish. If you try to balance, I choose what is the most important ones. And let's do the most important ones in class. But sometimes I skip…I will ask them [the students], in the hospital do you do this [using certain language]? [Students reply] Yes. [Teacher asks] How often do you do

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this? And they will say, maybe once or twice. [Teacher responds] Oh, let's forget about it. (Marcy, Outer Circle, public institution)

Another teacher similarly works under a strict management and faces limitations in that every teacher must be "doing exactly the same thing" with regard to teaching content, homework assignment, and course assessment. Yet, even in such a limiting circumstance, this teacher still finds ways to exercise his agency—when he has a chance, he would sneak in extra materials that he believes would truly benefit the students, as the following interview excerpt illustrates:

> *It used to be we had a little bit more freedom with what we were doing…More and more, they [the management] are under more pressure to follow [the policy] and to have this kind of results from tests, you should be here after this test. And so, it's getting more and more bookish and more and more writing- and exam-based…*
>
> *I really want the students to do well…And I try to get these classes to be a little bit more interesting than they are. So, my motivation is to try to make something that's not ordinarily a lot of fun into something that can make them [the students] laugh a little. Even though I have stricter framework to follow, I could still deviate a little bit and try to make them [classes] be a little bit more creative and not everyone doing the exact same thing all the time. (Mitch, Inner Circle, private institution)*

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Not all teachers face such limiting circumstances in their work context, however. Over half of the teachers from the selected interviews could exercise their agency quite freely, albeit to differing degrees and for different reasons. Such differences seem to stem from the management and the structural context under which the teachers work. In some institutions, the management is well aware of both the policy and their institutional context, e.g., readiness of the teachers to implement the policy or the students' current proficiency level and their potential to improve. With such good understanding, the management seems to be more flexible toward policy implementation and achievement, thus allowing teachers to exercise and achieve agency in their respective classroom. With such freedom and flexibility, some teachers reported that they are able to adapt the lessons according to the students' proficiency level. Others use trial and error in order to find class activities or materials that best suit the students. The interview excerpts below illustrate the freedom the teachers have in exercising their agency in their classroom context:

> *We're just lucky. In our department, our bosses are like, you can do whatever is good for the students. It's up to you as long as we have this guideline [the policy] to follow. Don't forget that. But inside the classroom, you're free. And that's what, I mean, that's quite comforting to me as a teacher. I can design my own [teaching content and materials]. We're just lucky that we have this kind of administrators who understand what they're doing. (Giselle, Outer Circle, private institution)*

> *Some of the ways we go about achieving these [policy objectives], some of the methods that we currently use, even in the more rigid courses that we teach, there's still an opportunity for teachers to exercise their own ideas. And I think most teachers are going by these anyway, you know. The whole point of teaching students English is to improve their level.*
>
> *The first few times I taught that particular course…I did it a few times, and I realized it was horrible. I hated doing it. I hated doing it. I could tell the students hated doing it. And I just had to sit down and think, well, how can I make this a bit more interesting and useful?…We've got so many different sections to do, and the course coordinator and the administrators are trying to make sure that everyone's on the same page [but] I do get the freedom…to design activities to reach certain objectives. I would say a lot of them actually are aligned with this CEFR framework. (Albert, Inner Circle, public institution)*

> *So, Listening and Speaking [the compulsory English course chosen to be talked about by the participant], teachers get to choose our material, our book, and the main textbook…We're given freedom to design our own tests.*
>
> *So, for those who are teaching [sections with weaker students], they would try to not teach all the parts of the book. So, they will simplify the*

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textbook but at the same time teach what is stipulated on the course syllabus. So, we just try to do our best for the students.

I like to check the other teams' materials and books so that I could, we could, adapt to each other and match each other. At times, they [the management] would choose an A2 book. But when we read it, it seems like it's B1. So, when we meet, which we check, we try to evaluate different textbooks and materials [to make sure they suit the students]. (Miranda, Outer Circle, public university)

Some teachers reported that their institution fully embraces the national policy and uses the national policy as a basis for the English curriculum. Although this means the teachers have to create or change certain things in their teaching and learning context, they do not feel negative toward this circumstance. Instead, it seems these teachers feel that, in doing so, they get to exercise their agency and feel satisfied by it, even though the resulting action may raise some people's eyebrows, such as teachers initiating tutoring sessions in order to prep the students for the required end-of-year English proficiency test.

The first case comes from two Expanding Circle teachers from the same public institution. The two teachers talked about how their institutional policy and the national policy are in alignment, and how teachers in their institution became active in adopting the national policy into their practice:

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[What we have done] came before this policy. It's a coincidence. [Our institution's English language policy] started off with a roundtable with instructors from various faculties even before this national policy came out. Some of them suggested that we have English exit exam…And when the national policy came out, we found that they [institutional policy and national policy] are in line. So, we created a curriculum that's in accordance with the CEFR levels as well—that we aim to produce graduates who'll have at least a B1. (Jitti, Expanding Circle, public institution)

Even with the point on active learner, it's in the institutional policy long before we see it in the national policy. It [active learner] is also my personal *belief, which matches what the institution has designed [in its curriculum] and now also matches the national policy. The CEFR is also influencing how we design our course in that we look at the language content of each course and see which level it is according to the CEFR…Is it too high or is it too low?…It's influencing our course design. So, everyone in the department brings their ideas together and discusses in our meetings [how to design each course].*

[Having the exit exam in the policy] makes students realize the importance of English. It also makes the teachers of other faculties realize that the university is being serious about English and become more active. We've seen how, when other faculties have meetings, they try to integrate English into their curriculum as much as they can. I see that as a good thing. (Orapan, Expanding Circle, public institution)

The second case comes from one Expanding Circle teacher and one Outer Circle teacher from the same private institution. The Expanding Circle teacher talked about how the national policy is the basis of their institutional policy objectives, and the Outer Circle teacher talked about how their English curriculum was adjusted in order to integrate the clauses and objectives of the national policy:

[The national policy] makes us realize, at the bare minimum, what English proficiency level our students should graduate with, and we teachers must try to help push them to that level.

From the very start, we've always had our own institutionally-developed proficiency test that we use to measure the progress of our students' English proficiency. We offer this test every year. But with the policy [referring to the clause on the exit exam in the national policy], we've changed to the TOEIC test. We have students of all undergraduate levels take the TOEIC test at the end of every academic year. We've done this for two years now. We believe students should be assessed by a test that is standardized and pass at the level that is used nationwide.

So, in addition to regular classes, last year we arranged TOEIC tutoring classes for students in year 3 and year 4 [and] this year we expand

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these tutoring classes down to students in year 1 [so that students can pass the required TOEIC test by graduation]. We believe that having a certain level of language proficiency is one thing, but to accomplish a standardized test, students also need to know test-taking strategies. That is why we offer TOEIC tutoring classes to students of all years, so that they can take the test at the end of the academic year…Every one of us takes care of the students together. I feel I'm deeply involved, and I'm very happy to do it. (Apinya, Expanding Circle, private institution)

We've been doing that [following the objectives of the national policy]. Because from time to time, we are also informed by our head…From time to time, we are also informed about the latest [national policy], that is why we also change the curriculum into a new version now…perhaps also to match what the policy requires.

For example, [referring to the clause on creating environment conducive to learning English in the national policy] I have conducted English camp [as an] extracurricular activity. That's one. This is part [of] listening and speaking practices…to promote their [the students'] skills in order to help them, especially the problematic ones, to help them improve their skills and help them with the [grade and proficiency level]. (Albedo, Outer Circle, private institution)

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Interestingly, there are also quite a number of teachers who seem to be able to freely practice according to their own beliefs—that they can fully exercise their agency—without being bound by the policy requirements. However, when probed, it was found that it was because these teachers are not aware of the policy, either because the policy has not been communicated to them or because the policy is not much, or not at all, considered in their work context. The interview excerpts below demonstrate such instances:

No one tells me [how to teach]. I figure it out myself…There's no policy handed to us…So, if you ask whether I'm following the policy, I will say no. Everyone teaches independently…If talking specifically about policy, my *department is not talking about it much. We are still solving our daily problems such as we're having too many students in a class. We only talk about issues like this…I don't really know if I'm following the policy. I actually do what I think should be done, so I don't think policy plays any role [in my action]…I do because I think I have to do, not because of the policy. (Ganda, Expanding Circle, public institution)*

To be honest, when I teach, I don't have any framework [from the policy] in my head at all. Personally, I never thought about it. [Researcher: Is that because you're not required to use it, or because you're not told about it?] For the classes that I teach? No, I've never been told about it. (Wattana, Expanding Circle, private institution)

But those [national] policies do come from above, right?…Especially, the problem is just we [foreign instructors] are not involved in that. We're just not involved in policy-level discussion…We're not invited…We're just not part of the discussion. [A close colleague who is Thai] she said, well, at public universities, foreign staff are second-class citizens, she said, just so you know…It doesn't sound nice. But it's not far from the truth. [It's not] that self-conscious, deliberate, sort of racist kind of thing. It's just the way it has been. But you certainly get that feeling that you're sort of left out of decision-making processes and whatever. (Henry, Inner Circle, public institution)

The cases presented in this section have illustrated the varying degrees that teachers are able to exercise and achieve agency in their classroom context, given the contingency of the policy. The next section will then discuss key contributing factors to the cases demonstrated above.

4.3.2.2 Achievement of teacher agency: Key contributing factors

As can be gleaned from the interview excerpts in the above section, there are several factors that contribute to the exercise and achievement—or the absence—of teacher

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agency. The paragraphs below will discuss these key contributing factors in more detail.

1. Key contributing factors pertaining to work environment or the ecology

1.1 Management's attitude and action toward the national policy

The attitude and action of the management toward the national policy significantly contribute to how and how much teacher agency can be exercised and achieved. From the interview excerpts above, it can be seen that, more often than not, it is not the policy itself that is enabling or restraining the teachers but how the management enacts the policy or passes it down to the teachers that matters. For example, in the case of Giselle, even though she faces the difficulty of having to follow the policy requirements without being given a reason why, she can still exercise her agency to a certain extent. This is because her immediate supervisor is understanding and responsive of the situation and thus allows for flexibility in the classroom, as long as the teachers still keep the requirement of the policy in mind. The same situation goes with Nigel, who said, "I do concede that [at this university], although they [the management] are aware of the national plan and so on, [they] do allow a lot of flexibility." Hence, Nigel is able to adjust his teaching methodology so as to match the proficiency of his students. On the other hand, teachers working under very strict management, such as Mitch, are not able to deviate from the policy because the management is pressured to meet the policy objectives and hence forces the teachers to oblige to its by-the-book requirement.

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The management's attitude also influences the teachers' attitude toward policy. For example, as seen from the cases of Jitti and Orapan, teachers whose management has positive attitude and a clear sense of direction take the policy into their practice without feeling that their agency is being taken away from them. These teachers do not feel that they are forced to act simply because there are mandates that "come from above," as put by Henry, and therefore are more open-minded toward the policy objectives and what they have to do in order to achieve such objectives.

1.2 Collegiality and collaboration among teachers and staff

Collegiality and collaboration among teachers and staff, together with constructive attitude and action of the management, lead to a work environment and culture that is conducive to achievement of teacher agency, in light of the mandated policy. This is because the teachers feel positive about the policy and are comfortable working together as a team toward reaching the policy objectives. Even though this means having to sit in multiple meetings, as seen in the cases of Jitti and Orapan in the above section, the teachers and staff feel empowered and are willing to embrace the policy. Collegiality and collaboration also cultivate sense of belonging in the workplace and, consequently, enhance both the sense and the achievement of teacher agency, as the following interview excerpt illustrates:

> *My colleagues, both Thais and foreigners, are very enthusiastic…My program is also very supportive of, say, if we think of events or activities to help the students, then they're very supportive…It's very team effort…It's very collaborative because we [foreign instructors] get to join projects, or we get to work on activities that, say, if we have some suggestions, we are very free to let them [other instructors in the department] know, or message the chair, or talk to the chair, or talk to the department head. So, I think the working environment is pretty good, based on my experience. So, for example, if my foreign colleagues and I think of a project—a competition, for example—that we want to propose to the faculty, then we are allowed to do that. We are also encouraged to make our own textbooks and all materials [and] do research. So, it's quite free, and it's also empowering. (Miranda, Outer Circle, public institution)*

In contrast, when collegiality and collaboration are absent and the management not active, especially when it comes to communication of the policy, the teachers feel negative toward the overall work environment, leading to the feeling of exclusion and a limited sense of agency. For instance, an Inner Circle teacher from a public institution reported that he is never informed of the policy—whether national or institutional—and, being one of merely two foreign instructors in the department, that he feels left out because communication, whether formal or informal, is all in

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Thai. Even though he acknowledges that this is likely unintentional, he still feels as if he is invisible to others in the department. As a result, his sense of belonging and his achievement of agency are negatively affected. This in turn has a negative consequence on his teaching quality. An excerpt from this teacher's interview illustrates:

> *I'm somewhat disengaged…There's lots of back and forth at lunch happening in Thai, and sometimes if I want to try to instigate a conversation in English, if I feel comfortable doing that, then it's fine. But sometimes I don't feel up to the task, feeling like I'm interrupting time for social…I think I would be more engaged if, for example, there was more invitation to engage. But I feel like my engagement level is largely based on my own impetus or self-initiated…The environment doesn't preclude further engagement. But it doesn't promote. Literally, there's no official acknowledgment of a need for foreign teachers to integrate into the system…There's a lot of swirling around me that I feel awkwardness, indecipherable in a way…These things can be slightly alienating.*
>
> *You know, if there's an announcement or something, foreign teachers [should] get the same official notice as everyone else, [but it] is all in Thai. So, [if] the foreign teachers need to or want to understand that, they either have to be able to read it or bring it to someone and say, what is this about?*
>
> *There's a long way towards avoiding any unnecessary frustration that eventually leads to burnout…Some of my disengagement does affect the way I teach…I don't often have all the energy. I would like to really cultivate better relationship with my students…My teacher agency ends, to a large extent, at the classroom door…*
>
> *There's very few meetings or orientations or sessions where feedback and guidance is shared around, you know, the goals and approach that we might take…My current classroom practice is very much conditioned by a general sense of confusion at this point…I found myself trying to decipher what is really happening.*
>
> *In general, the way I manage that is to discuss and reflect with other teachers [outside of the department] about the constant sort of tension*

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between what you're supposed to do and what you want to do…I don't feel like I have a clear community of practice. Usually, when I discuss issues about teacher agency or teacher identity and the ups and downs of teaching, it's mostly online with people who aren't anywhere near my location in the world…So, there's a sense of isolation that is very head spinning to me. (Mathias, Inner Circle, public institution)

As illustrated by the case of Mathias above, the negative impact on the teachers' sense and achievement of agency due to the lack of collaboration and collegiality can be exacerbated with the lack of communication. However, no communication does not always mean no agency. Rather, no communication can actually lead to teachers exercising complete agency, as will be demonstrated in the next section.

1.3 Communication of policy

When communication flows smoothly in the department, and all teachers and staff are informed of the policy, things tend to fall into place. When teachers are excluded from the communication loop, as in the case of Mathias, things tend to fall by the wayside. Mathias is not the only teacher in this study who faces communication mishap. Another Inner Circle teacher from a public institution, Seth, also faces a similar situation. Seth said that a major problem that he encounters at work—and he showed the researcher an evidence, which was right on his table—is lack of communication and inclusion mentality. As with Mathias, Seth received a letter from his department, but it was all written in Thai except for his name. He had to ask other Thai instructors to read it for him, and it turned out to be an important duty he had to do, which he eventually had to cancel class in order to do it. Besides the letter, Seth reported that most meetings are conducted in Thai, and there is seldom a meeting arranged in English for foreign instructors. Therefore, foreign instructors in Seth's department are never informed of the policy, or any other information for that matter. Interestingly, it is because of this lack of policy awareness that in a sense enables Seth and his foreign-instructor colleagues to freely exercise and achieve teacher agency—because they have no knowledge of the mandated requirements, they are able to give their

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classroom practices free rein. In fact, even his Thai counterpart in the same department, Ganda, shared a similar story—that the policy is not among the communicated issues discussed in departmental meetings.

Lack of policy communication, coupled with a laissez-faire attitude of the management, lead both Seth and Ganda to fully utilize their past experience in their current practice, in essence fully exercising and achieving teacher agency, as the following excerpts illustrate:

> *I don't know any policy. They don't give me. But my aim is always to try to develop them [the students]…I think they [the department] have asked me to do [this] course because of my background [in business]. So, I try to add. I have the book, but I also add things, because I've been in the same [business] situation. For instance, we talk about networking and when you go to networking events. And I try to explain, you know that in the modern world, you're always networking, your business wants you to try and promote their business…And so, I try to incorporate many activities and try to add vocabulary. There is vocabulary in the book, but I add lots and lots of vocabulary that's straight from my head. So, I do add a lot. (Seth, Inner Circle, public institution)*

> *No one tells me [how to teach]. I figure it out myself…There's no policy handed to us…So, if you ask whether I'm following the policy, I will say no. Everyone teaches independently…If talking specifically about policy, my department is not talking about it much. We are still solving our daily problems such as we're having too many students in a class. We only talk about issues like this…I don't really know if I'm following the policy. I actually do what I think should be done, so I don't think policy plays any role [in my action]…I do because I think I have to do, not because of the policy. (Ganda, Expanding Circle, public institution)*

Absence of communication and management's laissez-faire attitude is present not only in Ganda and Seth's institution. Another public institution of the same tier

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seems to have a similar non-controlling culture, as reported by Henry in the following excerpt:

> *But no, in short, the answer is no. We do not pay any mind out of ignorance more than anything to [the policy]. But, certainly, because we are quite left to our own devices when it comes to teaching, and we don't have a centralized mission that we're all working towards…the actual content of the assignment, even that is very much left up to us…*
>
> *Where there are a lot of teachers, there's a beginning of a semester meeting, where there's discussion about the selection of text…And then once we have decided, then there is a syllabus that gets passed down to everybody. That, we more or less have to follow, but there isn't a monitoring, and there isn't a checking, and there's a lot of flexibility as to how you go about completing [the course]…I mean, if it's essay writing, I've taught essay writing for God knows how many years and how many semesters, there are certain things that you need to cover, whether you use a book or whether you just design it yourself.*
>
> *Very much independent, I think it's very much culture. This is the culture that is not controlling. (Henry, Inner Circle, public institution)*

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Independence or flexibility aside, as can be noticed from the cases of Seth, Ganda, and Henry, another factor that makes teachers capable of exercising their agency, and being able to achieve it, is their past experience, both personal and professional. In fact, findings from this study suggest that past experience and other personal dispositions are also key contributing factors to the exercise and achievement of teacher agency, the details of which are discussed in the following section.

2. Key contributing factors pertaining to teachers' personal dispositions

Teachers' personal dispositions have much to do with the three agentic dimensions proposed by Emirbayer and Mische (1998)—the iterational dimension (the orientation toward the past), the projective dimension (the orientation toward the future), and the practical-evaluative dimension (the orientation toward the present). As illustrated in the conceptual framework of the study (see Figure 3), these three agentic dimensions—and, with them, personal dispositions—are subject to the influence of the policy yet at the same time determine how teacher agency is exercised and achieved in a given context. Hence, teachers' personal dispositions are key contributing factors of teacher agency that should not to be overlooked.

For the first three key contributing factors that will be discussed below—family upbringing, past work experience, and motivation—the teachers' practical-evaluative dimension is mainly guided by their iterational dimension. For the latter two—teachers' beliefs and wants and being a lifelong learner—the teachers' practical-evaluative dimension is guided by a combination of the iterational dimension and the projective dimension. Each of these key contributing factors is further elaborated and exemplified below.

2.1 Family upbringing

For some teachers, family upbringing exerts a strong influence on what it means for them to be a teacher. Their upbringing informs their beliefs and impels their actions, hence constructing a strong sense of agency. Two Outer Circle teachers, one from a public institution and another from a private institution, specifically attribute their agency to their upbringing. Excerpts from the interview with these two teachers are as follows:

> *I follow a principle that was taught to me by my father. My father once told me that if there is something that you think is right, say it, voice it out…So, if there is something that I believe is good for everybody, or good for a specific group of people that I serve, I have to say it. If they listen, thank you. If they don't listen, I hope someday they will realize it…So, I have had that principle since and until now. That's why I have the guts to talk. The second principle is, my father told me that no one is indispensable…They can just kick you out anytime. So, why not say what you have to say and you believe will be useful and will be good for everybody?…So, with those two principles, I braved, and I survived…(Marcy, Outer Circle, public institution)*

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> *[B]oth my parents were teachers. So, I grew up looking at them, looking up to them. So, [I] grow up in the environment with teachers. My sisters were also*

> *teachers, five of them, all teachers, and I'm the sixth. My father was a principal. So yeah, having that environment really helped me [become the teacher that I am]…Whatever happens, this is the profession that fed us when we grew up. (Albedo, Outer Circle, private institution)*

2.2 Past work experience

Similar to family upbringing, past work experience exerts a strong influence on teacher agency, which is demonstrated in how teachers take action in the present. For many teachers, it is no surprise that their accumulated teaching experience has forged their skills and capability, creating not only a sense of agency but also a sense of self-efficacy, as Henry, an Inner Circle teacher from a public institution put it in an excerpt presented earlier, "I've taught essay writing for God knows how many years and how many semesters…" Similarly, Greg, an Outer Circle teacher from a public institution, talked about the pride he took in both his education degree and his professional teaching experience. This gives him a strong sense of self-efficacy and agency, in that he believes teaching skills are acquired through experience, not through following the policy, as shown in the interview excerpt below:

> *I have my own style, because [teaching] is what I do. We are teachers. We are taught to design methodologies on our own, without the help of the policies. But for other teachers, they have to listen to policies, then implement them from the advice of the administrators or directors…It means teachers, education-graduate teachers, have techniques and strategies…Policies are just supplemental. It's not the one that supports us in our teaching. It's just additional. [Even] without the policies, we can teach our students…[We] are not guided by the policy. [We] are guided by the wisdom of the teachers. (Greg, Outer Circle, private institution)*

Interestingly, the findings of this study also show that teachers who have experience working in non-education fields prior to becoming a teacher not only attribute their sense of agency and sense of self-efficacy to their experience working in those fields, but they also feel that having such experience makes them more

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worldly—at times more capable—than teachers who have never worked in other professions. Interview excerpts below illustrate:

> *[My past experience working in other fields] really has a lot of influence on me. Those 10 years of [non-education] experience makes me see the discrepancies between what is taught in the classroom and what is actually used in the real world. What we teach our students are hardly used in the actual workplace. So, I can use my past experience to supplement the course materials. I share my techniques, from my own experience, with the students. I find that commercial textbooks do not meet the real needs of the real world. There's one course, English for Service Industry, there's no exact commercial text…So, I compiled my 10-year experience into teaching materials, and I get updated information from my friends who are still in the field. I find that this really works. Even my students who have graduated, some of them have moved to a foreign country, and they tell me they still use my teaching materials in their work even today. It makes me feel so good, like, what I've tried hard to teach you, you can really use it in real life. This is because the materials come from real work experience…Because I've worked in many fields—a tour guide, a news reporter, a translator, and more—I know what knowledge and skills are really needed…But I sense that most of those who become teachers right after they graduate, whether M.A. or Ph.D., I feel that they are just stereotypical teachers teaching by the book. (Fasai, Expanding Circle, public institution)*

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> *Right after graduating from college, I worked as a volunteer with one animal protection foundation…It helped me see different angles of people as well as the value of people. I learned that we need to take care of people's thoughts and perspectives first. If you want change, it has to come from the inside, their inside…After that, I worked with the American Peace Corps. They taught me how to be a professional trainer…From them, I learned how to gauge people's attitude, which was tough. Now, when I work with students, I also use these skills.*

I also got a lot of teaching knowledge from the Peace Corps. Even the Audiolingual Method, all the theories, how to develop teaching materials, how to fine-tune them, and how to assess students. I learned all of this from them…It makes me feel very confident when I tell someone I used to be a Peace Corps Trainer, that I have a degree for quality. I don't like to brag about my master's degree, not even my Ph.D. But I'm proud to show off that I was a Peace Corps Trainer. (Ganda, Expanding Circle, public institution)

I worked in non-education fields before. I wasn't a teacher from the start. I believe that I have the knowledge and skills [to teach this course]; otherwise, I wouldn't teach it. For teachers who've worked in the outside world, it's like we've traveled to other countries. We've got wider perspectives. Having outside-world experience helps me understand the nature of my students, why they do or don't do certain things. I can also share my own experience with students, and students will believe in what I say because I have direct experience. But if I only have teaching experience and nothing else, students will ask, how do you know for real? (Lalipa, Expanding Circle, private institution)

I'm exposed not only to teaching [but also to other professions]. I think it's an advantage for me…I think university should get lecturers who are actually graduates of that particular job or subject. You're HR, then teach HR. You're marketing, go teach marketing. This is one of the best ways to really teach the students the proper way. Because if you're just a teacher, I'm sorry, if you're a teacher full-time, teaching at the university, and no contact with the reality, somehow you will be eaten by the system…There's no motivation to really look for something new and find out what's really happening [in the outside world]. So, that's an advantage for me, too. That's why I can see the change because I'm teaching, for example, [a business English course]. I know what's happening in [business]. So, when I teach, I can tell them [the students] [what is currently going on in the business world].

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I'm a lifelong learner. And at the same time, I'm in touch with the reality. So, [I'm] always updated. That's why I know why we have to change, why I have to do this. Even my syllabus, you know, I've been teaching [this course] since 2016, my syllabus every year changes. It's not the same…Since I work, I know what's going on, so I change. Because I'm exposed. I'm not a lecturer within the university waiting for my next class and then go…For me, I work outside, I see the world. And then I go to university, and I share what's outside. I'm not [confined to] the context of university universe…Do you think these [other] lecturers will find a way to [know whether] these textbooks still apply at the moment?…Or else, they will never have changes even in the syllabus. I doubt it. (Adrian, Outer Circle, private institution)

2.3 Motivation

A number of interviews in this study reveal an impressive degree of intrinsic motivation of the teachers. Most of these teachers credited the emotional reward received when they see that their students are learning or have succeeded. This also contributes to the teachers' sense of purpose and sense of accomplishment, which in turn drives their motivation and agency to continue with or to improve their teaching for the betterment of their students' education. On the other hand, not seeing the students perform as expected could derail the teachers' motivation and agency. The interview excerpts below exemplify such cases:

As a teacher, you're happy [when] a student produces this kind of, a conversation, for example. It's a great feeling…[I] think about my students, you know, because I won't be here without them anyway. The reason, the purpose of doing it [teaching] every day is because of them. Why do you be or why do you become a teacher? It's because of them anyway, right?…And this was my purpose when I came to Thailand…

So, you know, just serve your purpose. I mean, to still focus on that, even if it's not 100%. Again, as I told you, little improvement from my students, that gives me happiness already. I'm fine with whatever it is this year. I'm good. My students learned 5% already. And that's an accomplishment. I'm happy already…[It's] that kind of feeling [that] cannot

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be paid at all. There's no price. It's priceless. (Albedo, Outer Circle, private institution)

Actually, you know, it's kind of, we call internal motivation, right? You need to have some kind of internal motivation…So, with the degree of intrinsic motivation, really, I like teaching. Because if you can change anyone's life to a better position, I like it. So, that is my goal. And that should be the goal of every teacher, right? You should help someone to change his life. It can be done only through education. So, you can do it only if you are a really intrinsically motivated teacher with some principles. Having some principles, having some objectives, what you want to do, and the outcome of it. So, I think the teacher is the only person who can die peacefully and happily. Yeah, the other people cannot. Maybe doctors. They also do a very great job. Teachers are also the first one, the one, who creates all professions, right? So, I think teaching is a noble profession, rather than a duty…

[People who are internally motivated] they will work really with the sense of satisfaction. The first thing is job satisfaction, right? Even with the low salary. Now here, my salary is 25,000 baht. You see, I get one third of what I got [while teaching in other countries]. Yes. But it's not the money. Satisfaction from your job is the most important. I enjoy teaching. (Suresh, Outer Circle, public institution)

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I like to teach. [It is] my calling…My calling is with the transitional students [first-year undergraduate students]. They're going from high school, preparing for the working world…I like meeting new students. I like to build a good relationship with them. I think that, to me, being a facilitator and a cheerleader is part of my job, to help them. If I'm not enjoying myself, then they're not going to be enjoying themselves…So, honestly, just to get them to say a few words in English other than hello is [a] reward enough. (Timothy, Inner Circle, private institution)

What motivates me is seeing the end result of my, I hope, input…When I see the production phase by the students, you know, it makes me feel satisfied. Happy, you could say. That satisfaction, that happiness, motivates me to give the students my knowledge and my help in achieving that. So yeah, motivation, I like to see students doing a good job and enjoying it…Conversely, the weaker students, the shy ones who struggle, that can be demotivating for me. Why have I been here? (Nigel, Inner Circle, private institution)

Some teachers consider their relationship with their students more than just teacher-and-students. They consider students part of their personal circle—either as friends or as family members. Thus, their motivation goes beyond merely helping students pass a particular course. There is a sense of responsibility within these teachers that extends to helping students graduate and succeed in life, as demonstrated by the following interview excerpts:

My motivation is that, I see students as my friends whom I need to help to graduate. Even after they graduate, I still coach them as to how they should continue to learn English…I have fun tutoring and coaching them and seeing them succeed [in life]…I feel good when I can be useful, when I can help my students, and when they approach me when they need help. (Fasai, Expanding Circle, public institution)

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Since I am also a mother…when I go inside the classroom, I consider my students my daughters and sons. So, that is my source [of motivation]—my family, especially my daughter. Because what I wanted to do, since I am away from my family, I am away from my daughter, I cannot do it to them. So, I am trying to do it to my students…Since I don't have enough time with my family, with my children, I try to do it to my students…For me, it's just like a family. The children are looking for [your help and guidance]. So, I do that. (Dana, Outer Circle, private institution)

2.4 Beliefs and wants

The findings from this study show that teachers' perspectives toward teaching and learning may be formed in the past, whether through their own education or through their professional experience. However, from these perspectives, teachers also envision how they would like their classroom or students' learning to be—their beliefs and wants. This vision motivates them, gives them a sense of agency, and drives them into action, as the following interview excerpts illustrate:

> *I would very much keep [my class] experiential. They [the students] have to go somewhere, do something, and then report back or show something back in class in a week or two weeks later. I don't like traditional learning by rote—just sitting there, spoon-feeding students information. They don't learn a lot, and they don't enjoy it. And it's one of the joys, one of my motivations is to see the happiness and the joy and the expressions on their [the students'] face when they're clearly enjoying something when using the language. (Nigel, Inner Circle, private institution)*

> *The most important thing is inside the classroom. You can go beyond that if your students need or are able to…More or less you have this line where you follow according to the needs of your students, for me that's important…So, I always tell students, some of you would run, some of you would walk, but the most important thing is we are able to move from point A to point B. (Giselle, Outer Circle, private institution)*

> *Students should learn in their natural pace. If they understand what they read, they will be ready to learn. If they are happy with reading…if they feel comfortable reading, they will understand that English is not too hard for them to grasp, that it is possible for them to learn even after they finish this course or when they are not in the classroom. That, I think, is the success. It's not about whether the students know what tone and purpose [of the reading passage] is. If they can read, they will know naturally. This is what I believe. (Lalipa, Expanding Circle, private institution)*

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We need to motivate first ourselves as a teacher. Because if we don't have the motivation in teaching, we don't have the love, the passion in teaching, I'm not sure if our students will learn from us…It doesn't mean that it's all teacher factors, but we are one of the factors for the students to learn…So, it's on the hands of the teacher. We are educators. So, we need to do the best we can for our students.

The first thing is, since we are a teacher, we consider ourselves a motivator. So, our goal is to let the students learn. Our goal is to change the students' life…I mean, we are molding the students to have a good life in the future, right?…Your role as a teacher is you are the source, you are the strength of your students. So, you need to stand as a teacher, even though you feel, oh, my goodness, I am not feeling good today. But make sure that inside the classroom, you will not bring your whatever problem you have. (Dana, Outer Circle teacher, private institution)

2.5 Being a lifelong learner

As seen in the interview excerpts of Adrian and Greg in the previous section, some teachers seem to draw their agency from the fact that they are lifelong learners. They like to learn new things and try to apply what they learn to their practice, whether in the preparation process, such as syllabus or course design, or in the classroom. In addition, teachers regard themselves as learners not only of the materials or content relating to the subject that they teach but also of the broader system in which they work. Thus, what they learn help them become better teachers both in terms of subject matter and in terms of professionalism, as illustrated by the interview excerpts of Dana and Miranda below:

For me, [this course] is very challenging. Wow, I'm learning. I also taught nursing students, but when I compare [with the content of previous courses], wow, it's really different…

Different institutions have different rules and regulation, different experience. But it's up to us [teachers] how we are going to handle it. I learn a lot…So, I learned something that, wow, it's helping me [learn how] to

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manage. It's helping me [develop] my skills in management, in managing time. (Dana, Outer Circle, private institution)

If I have an opportunity, I try to attend any seminar I could…I like to read the newspapers, too, like, read about education policies and stuff…I like to learn more about the work. So, if one of my Thai colleagues said, oh, we have this activity or meeting and you may join, I would go. So, I get to learn more about the work. And then if I learn something, then I would go to my foreign colleagues and say, oh, I learned this thing, and then I would share it with them. So, we like to spread good news around and help each other. (Miranda, Outer Circle, public institution)

The below interview excerpt of Adrian not only shows that lifelong learning is his innate quality but also sums up the importance, or even the necessity, of lifelong learning to every teacher:

For me, I think, I'm a lifelong learner. If you see my résumé, you will see that [I never] stop attending seminars or workshops. There were even years wherein I took certification or being certified for something like three or four times in a year, things like that. So, I think that's one thing, that I myself is a lifelong learner, which is, as I said or mentioned earlier, is a must for teachers. If you're an educator, you yourself should be an example of a lifelong learner. You never stop, or else. I think learning doesn't stop. (Adrian, Outer Circle, private institution)

It must be noted that key contributing factors discussed above do not operate in isolation. In fact, they are intertwined and interrelated, and sometimes one can lend itself the other. For example, an open-minded management enables a more flexible work environment, which encourages collegiality and leads to collaboration among teachers and staff, as seen in the cases of Jitti and Orapan. In turn, collegiality and collaboration among teachers and staff, when coupled with the teachers' own characteristic of being a lifelong learner, leads to professional learning and development, as seen in the case of Miranda. There are also factors within a factor.

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For instance, teachers who have accumulated much experience, whether in- or outside of education, feel more confident of their capacity. This in turn builds their self-efficacy, leading to agency and actions. Alternatively, teachers with intrinsic motivation reported having a strong sense of purpose and sense of responsibility in teaching, leading also to agency and actions. Teacher agency is thus not a phenomenon that results from any one particular factor but from multiple factors, both from the surrounding ecology and from within the teachers, interacting and at times influencing one another.

Taking together the responses from the questionnaire survey and those from the interview, it is possible that teachers in this study do not feel the policy is affecting their agency because there are other factors that are more influential—such as the institutional management, the collegial environment, and the implicit or unwritten rules of the ecology in which the teachers work—and such factors to a certain extent act as a layer between the policy and the teachers. More importantly, teachers' own personal dispositions also play a critical role in forming their capacity to exercise and achieve agency. This can be aptly summed up by the following interview excerpt of Lalipa, who said of teacher agency both for herself and on behalf of her fellow teachers:

> *The policy doesn't have any influence on teachers, because every teacher has his or her own identity and his or her own agency. We cannot change these things [identity and agency]. If the teachers believe in the policy, they will do what the policy says. I believe in my own self, so I will do what I believe is best for the students. (Lalipa, Expanding Circle, private institution)*

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4.4 Findings for research question 3

Research question 3: How is agency of English teachers influenced by the English language assessment policy?

4.4.1 Quantitative data results

Questions 36 to 45 of the questionnaire survey asked the teachers to compare their situations in terms of whether there had been any changes in how they understood the policy and how they perceived themselves since the policy became effective in B.E.

2559 (2016 C.E.). The aim is to see the influence of the policy, if any, on the teachers' personal attributes—their beliefs, identity, motivation, confidence, and sense of control—of being an English language teacher as well as on the degree of freedom that the teachers have in their practice. As personal attributes determine how and how much teachers can exercise and achieve agency, if the policy exerts any influence on such attributes, it will also very likely exert influence on teacher agency. Results from Q36–Q45, along with a summary of response in Table 27, are presented below.

Q36–Q45: Comparison of situation before and after the policy became effective in B.E. 2559 (2016 C.E.)

From the response in Q36 *I am more aware of and better understand the objectives of English language teaching, learning, and assessment in higher education*. (Mean 3.30; T2B 30, 48%), it seems that the teachers in this study are more aware and have better understanding of the policy objectives for higher education (however, note the T2B slightly below 50% for this statement). Yet, the response in Q37 *I work more efficiently and effectively, with guidelines from the policies, toward achieving the policies' objectives*. (Mean 2.83; T2B 17, 27%) shows that the teachers do not seem to feel that they work more efficiently and effectively with the policy guidelines. In addition, the response in Q38 *I am more able and/or more empowered to act in my role(s), or in my abilities, to work toward achieving the policies' objectives*. (Mean 2.90; T2B 19, 30%) shows that, once again, the teachers do not feel more able or empowered by the policy. Thus, at the time of the study, which was roughly three years after the policy became effective, the teachers did not seem to feel that the implementation of the policy had helped them much with their work.

The responses in Q36, Q37, and Q38 are perhaps supported by the responses in Q39 to Q45, in that, the teachers lean toward strong agreement that the policy has

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Table 27

Teachers' comparison of situation before and after the policy became effective in B.E. 2559 (2016 C.E.) (n = 63)

Statement	Mean	Top 2 boxes n	Top 2 boxes %
Q36 I am more aware of and better understand the objectives of English language teaching, learning, and assessment in higher education.	3.30	30	48
Q37 I work more efficiently and effectively, with guidelines from the policies, toward achieving the policies' objectives.	2.83	17	27
Q38 I am more able and/or more empowered to act in my role(s), or in my abilities, to work toward achieving the policies' objectives.	2.90	19	30
Q39 The policies have *not* affected my beliefs in English language teaching, learning, and assessment.	3.67	39	62
Q40 The policies have *not* affected my identity as an English language teacher.	3.73	40	63
Q41 The policies have *not* affected my motivation in working as an English language teacher.	3.70	39	62
Q42 The policies have *not* affected my confidence in being an English language teacher.	3.94	47	75
Q43 The policies have *not* affected my sense of control when I work *inside* my compulsory English classroom.	3.94	43	68
Q44 The policies have *not* affected my sense of control when I work within my institution *other than* my compulsory English classroom (e.g., in my department or faculty).	3.65	35	56
Q45 I can still freely put my beliefs in English language teaching, learning, and assessment into use in my compulsory English classroom.	4.19	51	81

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not influenced their personal attributes of being and working as an English language teacher. This is seen from the fact that statements in Q39 to Q45 all receive relatively high mean and T2B (Mean ≥ 3.65; T2B > 60%, except Q44) as reported below:

Q39 *The policies have not affected my beliefs in English language teaching, learning, and assessment*.
This statement receives a mean of 3.67 and T2B of 39 (62%).

Q40 *The policies have not affected my identity as an English language teacher*.
This statement receives a mean of 3.73 and T2B of 40 (63%).

Q41 *The policies have not affected my motivation in working as an English language teacher*.
This statement receives a mean of 3.70 and T2B of 39 (62%).

Q42 *The policies have not affected my confidence in being an English language teacher*.
This statement receives a mean of 3.94 and T2B of 47 (75%).

Q43 *The policies have not affected my sense of control when I work inside my compulsory English classroom*.
This statement receives a mean of 3.94 and T2B of 43 (68%).

Q44 *The policies have not affected my sense of control when I work within my institution other than my compulsory English classroom (e.g., in my department or faculty).*
This statement receives a mean of 3.65 and T2B of 35 (56%).

Q45 *I can still freely put my beliefs in English language teaching, learning, and assessment into use in my compulsory English classroom*.
This statement receives a mean of 4.19 and T2B of 51 (81%).

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Of the seven statements above, the one in Q44 receives a somewhat neutral stance, but its overall mean and T2B are still relatively high. Also, the statement in Q45 receives a particularly strong mean and T2B, as if serving as a confirming, concluding remark from the teachers in this study that they have not been influenced by the policy in focus of this study.

In overall, the responses from this set of statements (Q36–Q45) show that the teachers perceive that their self has not been influenced or swayed by the policy, and they can still put their pedagogical beliefs into practice. Therefore, it seems that teacher agency can be exercised quite liberally by these teachers. However, it is yet questionable whether such exercise of agency stems from actual freedom given in the workplace or from the fact that some “unfortunate” situation forces the teachers to act on their own behalf—hence a seemingly high level of agency—in order to navigate through their daily working life, as seen from stories reported by Seth, Ganda, and Henry in the earlier section. Once again, analysis of interview responses—discussed in the section to follow—helps shed light on the why and the how of such matter.

4.4.2 Qualitative data results

Given the differences in work environment and personal dispositions, the teachers in this study exercise and achieve agency in varying ways and to various extents. Still, emerging from the interview responses are common patterns and characteristics amidst the teachers’ seemingly varying and various manifestation of teacher agency. Such commonality can be categorized into five types of agency manifestation, grouped according to how and how much teacher agency is influenced by the policy. The following paragraphs will discuss the five types of agency manifestation in more detail, starting off with the type with the least influence from the policy, progressing to the types with more influence from the policy, and ending with the type that seems to be an exception to policy influence[7].

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[7] Findings on the five types of agency manifestation were first reported in an article published in *rEFLections*, Volume 28, Number 2, May–August, 2021 (Dhammarungruang & Wudthayagorn, 2021).

Type 1: Resisting or ignoring policy

As the name suggests, the first type of agency manifestation is characterized by teachers demonstrating a high level of agency by resisting or ignoring, rather than effecting, the mandated change. From the 26 selected interviews, there are four teachers (15%) in this manifestation type, and the factors that influence them are both personal and external to the individuals. That is, these teachers seem to have strong personal dispositions, whether based on their beliefs, their past experience, or their upbringing. At the same time, there is a lack of clear communication of the policy in their workplace, hence the lack of full understanding of both the policy texts and its rationale. As these teachers could be considered "strong-headed," they are not willing to do what they neither completely understand nor agree with. Therefore, they demonstrate their agency by resisting or ignoring the policy.

An example case representing this manifestation type comes from Marcy. Marcy has been teaching for quite a few decades and, at the time of the study, was approaching her retirement. She said that her accumulated teaching experience has formed her strong beliefs in what it means to be a teacher. She is highly committed to the teaching profession, and her aim is to help her students excel. Also, she holds dearly to her heart two principles from her father, which has taught her to be outspoken for the things that she believes is right and to stand firm on her ground. For Marcy, her iterational dimension works at full force and in combination with her projective dimension to give her the courage—or, in her words, "the guts"—to confront the management and to continue practicing according to her own beliefs when she feels that there is an unreasonable policy being enforced in her teaching context. An excerpt from Marcy's interview is presented below:

> *I don't totally agree with the policy…[The policy] limits you in some ways that you cannot do this, you can only do this…Why should we not be allowed to do what we believe?…I don't care if I don't finish the curriculum…I'll just be ready to face and explain it to whoever I need to explain it. But I'm more on what is achievable, and what is good for my students…*
>
> *My father once told me that if there is something that you think is right, say it, voice it out…So, if there is something that I believe is good for everybody, or good for a specific group of people that I serve, I have to say it.*

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If they listen, thank you. If they don't listen, I hope someday they will realize it…That's why I have the guts to talk. The second principle is, my father told me that no one is indispensable…They can just kick you out anytime. So, why not say what you have to say and you believe will be useful and will be good for everybody?…So, with those two principles, I braved, and I survived…(Marcy, Outer Circle, public institution)

Another example is Lalipa, who worked in both the government sector and the private sector before coming into education and considers herself to have a good understanding of the reality that students must face when they step out of the university. In class, even though she is given a book and a syllabus to follow, Lalipa said that she always incorporates her real-world experience into her teaching. The policy, on the other hand, is not deemed useful to her and never crosses her mind. In fact, she stated that she would not follow any policy if it is in conflict with the reality, as the following interview excerpt illustrates:

I don't give anything about the policy any consideration. For any policy that comes along, I don't give it a thought. If I see that the policy is in conflict with the reality, if in reality it can't be done, I won't do it…If they force me to do it, fine, I'll do it the best I can, but I won't guarantee the results. I do things based on the reality. (Lalipa, Expanding Circle, private institution)

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Type 2: Adapting policy or making "room for manoeuvre"[8]

Teachers in the second type of agency manifestation use agency to accommodate the policy into their practice, without altering the ways things have been done in their teaching context. In this study, this type of agency manifestation can be seen in eight teachers (31%), making it the highest in number of members. The factors that influence these teachers seem to be an interplay of the characteristics of these teachers and of the people with whom they work. In particular, both the teachers and their management seem to have a good understanding of the policy, but at the same time they are well aware of their institution's context (e.g., their students' low English proficiency level). This results in collaboration and flexibility in the work

[8] Terminology taken from Priestley et al. (2012)

environment where the management allows for a gradual achievement of the targeted proficiency level. The teachers then work together to accommodate the policy objectives into their practice, picking and choosing which ones to be adapted or applied to their teaching context and by when.

A case to illustrate this manifestation type is Kasem. Kasem reported that his management is very knowledgeable of the policy and is well aware of the students' low English proficiency level. Thus, as per his management's consideration, it is not required that all students achieve the policy-designated proficiency level by graduation. At the same time, Kasem looks at his teaching context in a realistic point of view and takes the initiative to study the policy texts and the CEFR levels, so that he would have a better grasp what of what is required by the policy and what needs to be done. With the management's flexibility and his own initiation, Kasem collaborates with his colleagues in finding ways that can make the policy objectives work with the reality of his institution. For Kasem, all three agentic dimensions work together and in tandem with the structural context to produce teacher agency that is both individual (himself) and collective (himself together with his colleagues). An excerpt from Kasem's interview is presented below:

> *We're fortunate that our management is quite open-minded…We all talk—university-level policy makers, curriculum developers, management teams, and teachers—to come up with the agreed minimum level, and we all look at things as they are in reality. We won't set goals that look pretty on paper but can't be reached in the end…because we look at many factors—the students as well as the learning time…So, we take those things [our context] into consideration and set institutional goals that we can realistically attain. As for learning, we use both commercial textbooks and our own compiled materials, but teachers are also free to supplement with their own materials as they see fit.*
>
> *[Since the policy took effect] we have taken things more seriously in that we try to place the policy according to our institution's strategic roadmap—in terms of the development of students' English proficiency—how much this year, how much next year, how much the year after next. We apply the policy to the context of our institution, not that every student has to*

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achieve B2 as strictly said in the policy. That level is too luxurious…The required level is too difficult for us to attain. So, we adapt. We use our own reality as a basis. (Kasem, Expanding Circle, private institution)

Another case to illustrate this manifestation type is Miranda, an Outer Circle teacher from a public university. Similar to Kasem, Miranda takes the initiative to learn more about the policy—as illustrated in her interview excerpts presented in the earlier section—to attain a better understanding of it and use it as a guideline for her material development. Also similar to that of Kasem, her management is also knowledgeable of the policy and aware of the institution's current situation that, if the exit exam and the proficiency level required by policy are enforced right away, very few students would graduate. Thus, adaptation is also the strategy taken, as Miranda explained:

I would adapt the material, or the test, or the assignment, according to that group level, to each group level. Because that's what I see every time I meet with other foreign lecturers, we will talk about the same [situation], like, oh, this material is very difficult for them [the students]…I asked the other faculty teachers…how do you teach students who are not motivated or students who have repeated the course many times? So, all of them would tell me, do activities…adapt the material, make it simplified, make it easier…or keep on practicing them. Make them familiar with the test types. (Miranda, Outer Circle, public institution)

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Type 3: Adopting or appropriating policy

The third type of agency manifestation is characterized by teachers using agency to integrate the policy into their teaching context and form new practices. There are four teachers (15%) in this manifestation type, and the factors of influence seem to come from all working levels of the institution. At the highest administrative level, the teachers reported that the national policy and their institutional policy are aligned. Then, at the immediate supervisory level, the teachers reported that their management has a realistic picture of the current institutional context as well as a clear vision and direction—in relation to the national policy—for their institution. In addition, the management is open-minded and encourages inclusive communication of the policy, involving not only teachers but also related personnel. Thus, at the implementation level, this produces a work environment in which everyone can bring out their agency to work together to create an English language curriculum that aims toward achieving both national and institutional policy goals.

A case in point comes from Jitti and Orapan, who work in the same public institution. The two teachers reported that there is a large portion of students in their institution whose English proficiency is quite low. Fortunately, their management realizes this fact and at the same time has a clear direction for what needs to be done in order to help students reach higher levels of attainment and achieve the proficiency goals stated in the national policy. This clear direction is also reflected in the management's actions, in that the management would facilitate transmission of messages and promote teamwork by calling for meetings both in big groups as a form of whole-department communication and in smaller groups as a form of working-team collaboration. For Jitti and Orapan, their practical-evaluative dimension—i.e., their actions in the present—is strongly informed by the projective dimension—i.e., the vision and goals set by the management and empowered to the teachers—and this gives rise to both individual and collective agency. Excerpts of Jitti and Orapan's interview responses are presented below:

> *[Our institution's English language policy] started off with a roundtable with instructors from various faculties even before this national policy came out…And when the national policy came out, we found that they [institutional policy and national policy] are in line. So, we created a curriculum that's in accordance with the CEFR levels as well…Our department is small. Everyone knows one another and can talk freely. Everyone can get involved in everything…Everyone plans together and works together. So does the management. (Jitti, Expanding Circle, public institution)*

> *We live with our reality…Our management team has vision. They know what to do next and what for…They may not buy in with our ideas all the time, but…they are quite open and encouraging. They make us feel that we can share, we can think, and we can talk to them directly. They are open-minded.*

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In our meetings, we have to decide on every issue, from budgeting to policy, and this involves everyone, both faculty and staff…If you ask our full-time instructors about this policy, they'll know it because we've talked about it…If you ask how we trickle down our policy, there are many ways. One is formal meetings. Two is LINE [instant messaging] groups. The current management actually likes to create small groups for the working teams in the department…This makes communication easy. (Orapan, Expanding Circle, public institution)

Type 4: Strictly following policy

As with agency manifestation types 2 and 3, the factors of influence of agency manifestation type 4 are also primarily the teachers themselves and their management, but the scenario cannot be more different. The teachers in this manifestation type—comprising three teachers (12%)—reported that their management is pressured to pass the Ministry of Education's annual inspection and, hence, to meet the national policy objectives, and this pressure is consequently passed down to the teachers. Yet, these teachers lack the power to resist the management's demand despite their disagreement with what they are required to do. The teachers thus have little freedom to bring their pedagogical beliefs into practice, and their agency cannot be fully achieved as a result.

An example for this manifestation type comes from Mitch, who reported that almost every aspect of the English courses in his institution—e.g., the syllabi, textbooks, class exercises, and assessments—are revised as per the management, or supposedly as per the policy goal, without any involvement of the teachers. Mitch now has less freedom in his practice, and despite his disagreement, he feels that he has no choice but to accept the situation. Therefore, it seems that the structural context of Mitch's institution exerts considerable influence on the teacher, so much so that none of the three agentic dimensions could operate strongly enough to result in teacher agency. An excerpt from Mitch's interview is presented below:

It used to be we had a little bit more freedom with what we were doing…More and more, they [the management] are under more pressure to follow [the policy] and to have this kind of results from tests, you should be here after this

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test. And so, it's getting more and more bookish and more and more writing- and exam-based…We got too much about this [CEFR] level…and we have so many different categories where we test them [the students] on…A lot of pressure, I'm not sure that's the right way to go.

[Researcher: Is there anything in this particular course that you see or have to do that is a result of this policy?] Oh, almost all of it…So, it's getting more and more strict that way…They [the management] are looking at the scores. And then they're adjusting the syllabus…We had some more freedom about how we do one thing and the other. Now, because of these tests…all the students have to be doing the same thing at the same time. And so, the teachers don't have that freedom anymore…So, now it's like, this is week six and scores, scores, scores…They [the management] want to put all these together from all the courses, from all the sections, so they can have these exact numbers and charts. Squiggly lines. (Mitch, Inner Circle, private institution)

Teachers who belong to this manifestation type even seem to have been affected by the policy without realizing it. Some teachers reported that there were certain things in their course that they simply knew—or were told—that they had to do as required, but they were never given a reason as to why such requirements. Seeing and reading the policy attachment from this study was in fact when they were able to connect the dots and realize that it could have all along been the requirements from the policy, with which they had no choice but to comply, as the following interview excerpt exemplifies:

I've never seen it [the policy] on paper…So, seeing this in writing, I can see why many of our assignments now incorporate a digital or online element. I've just said to you that…they [the students] have to design and create an online blog. And now, seeing these requirements, or what you call it responsibility, I can see why we incorporate these literacy skills within our syllabus now. Before, I am thinking, why? This is a language course. Why do they need to learn web design?…I can see now that this is perhaps the reason why.

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Some students last week they questioned. They said, Ajarn, we don't know anything about the web. We don't know how to design a web page. And I said, well, you need to. I said, you have a point. As an English teacher, I agree with you. I'm here as an English language instructor to teach you the language not to teach you technical skills. [Students pleaded] But can we do it written, not online? I said, no, you have to follow the syllabus. You have to do it online. Send me the URL link to your online blog. [Students continued to plead] Ajarn, I don't know web design. I said, well, nor do I. But you know, they have to follow the syllabus, and this is to promote digital understanding and literacy and ability. (Nigel, Inner Circle, private institution)

Type 5: Exercising complete agency due to lack of policy awareness

Finally, the fifth type of agency manifestation is characterized by teachers not following the policy, due not to resistance or ignorance of policy but to lack of policy awareness. Seven teachers (27%) in this study belong to this manifestation type, making it the second-highest in number of members. The factor of influence for these teachers is twofold: First, there is a lack of attention to the policy in the teachers' department or institution. That is, the teaches' workplace seems to have a short-term mentality, focusing only on day-to-day operation. Although the teachers may not personally possess such a mentality, the work culture or the urgency of the matters pushes them toward this short-term orientation. Second, there is a lack of inclusive communication regarding policy matters. Most notably is the fact that some teachers are excluded from the communication loop due to their nationality (e.g., meetings are seldom arranged in English for foreign instructors) or their limited role (e.g., only those with managerial roles are involved in policy-related issues). Therefore, these teachers resort to their own strategy in order to resolve their daily issues without the consideration—or, more aptly, without the knowledge—of the policy requirement.

Vignettes representing this type of agency manifestation are from two teachers—Ganda and Henry—who work in two different public institutions of equivalent tier. Ganda reported that, as she is Thai, she was involved in all meetings. However, policy was hardly—if ever—discussed, and only pressing operational matters—such as class size being too large or certain courses not having enough

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teachers—were given attention. As for Henry, he reported that, as per his institution's rule, foreign instructors cannot hold administrative positions. Additionally, foreign instructors are not always invited to or included in meetings, and even when there are meetings for foreign instructors, policy is never among the communicated topics. Thus, both Ganda and Henry have to use their own past teaching experience or experience working in other fields (before becoming a teacher) to navigate through their daily working life. For these two teachers, their iterational dimension is the main source of their agency, with their projective dimension and practical-evaluative dimension operating independently of the policy requirement. Excerpts of their interview responses are presented below:

> *No one tells me [how to teach]. I figure it out myself…There's no policy handed to us…So, if you ask whether I'm following the policy, I will say no. Everyone teaches independently…If talking specifically about policy, my department is not talking about it much. We are still solving our daily problems such as we're having too many students in a class. We only talk about issues like this…I don't really know if I'm following the policy. I actually do what I think should be done, so I don't think policy plays any role [in my action]…I do because I think I have to do, not because of the policy. (Ganda, Expanding Circle, public institution)*

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> *But those [national] policies do come from above, right?…Especially, the problem is just we [foreign instructors] are not involved in that. We're just not involved in policy-level discussion…We're not invited…We're just not part of the discussion. [A close colleague who is Thai] she said, well, at public universities, foreign staff are second-class citizens, she said, just so you know…It doesn't sound nice. But it's not far from the truth. [It's not] that self-conscious, deliberate, sort of racist kind of thing. It's just the way it has been. But you certainly get that feeling that you're sort of left out of decision-making processes and whatever.*
>
> *I imagine that the vast majority of teachers pay no heed to policies, on a day-to-day level. I mean, on a day-to-day level, we have different problems and issues to deal with…So yeah, there's never any conversation about policy,*

not national-level policy…These national policies, no, it's just never come up…In day-to-day conversation, national policies just [don't] get a thought.

What gets discussed? Well…students not being able to do something or not understanding something…Just commentary about individual classes…Usually you're talking about your personal experience within the class, telling a joke or complaining. (Henry, Inner Circle, public institution)

As demonstrated in the paragraphs above, it can be inferred that teacher agency is the capacity of teachers to be reflective and reflexive toward "the internals" (i.e., the factors belonging within the teachers themselves) and "the externals" (i.e., the factors surrounding the teachers) and to act—or not to act—accordingly, given the affordances of the teaching context. With this understanding of how teacher agency is manifested, common vignettes from the 26 selected interviews can therefore be categorized into five agency manifestation types. This categorization is based on similarities in the internal and external factors, and while it is not possible to provide an exhaustive list, examples of such factors are as follows:

Internal factors:	Childhood upbringing, education, personal beliefs and values, personal experience, professional experience
External factors:	Nature of people in the workplace (e.g., management and colleagues), physical and non-physical resources (e.g., equipment, time, and budget), rules and regulations, policy, work culture and norms (both written and unstated)

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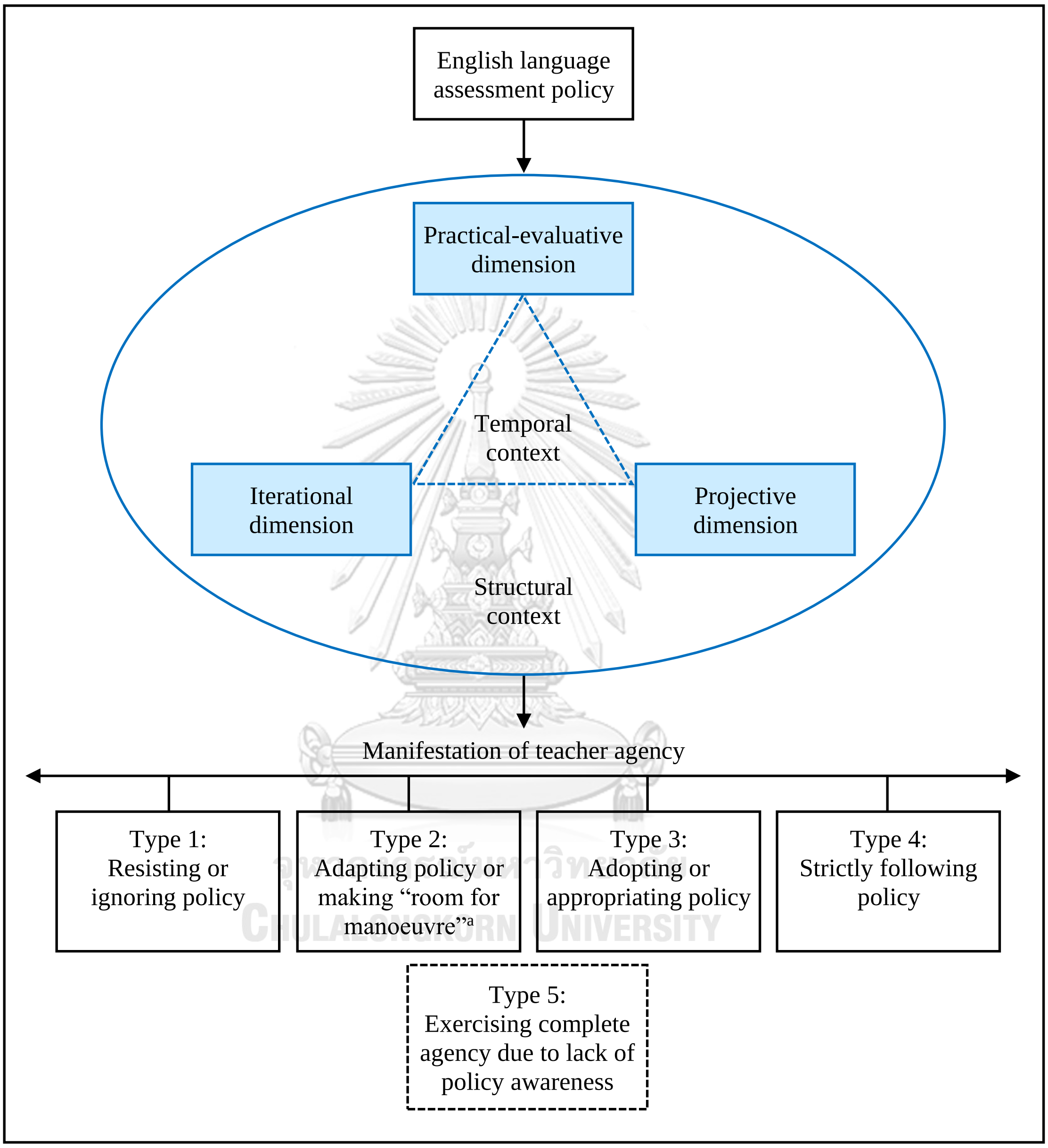
In addition to the categorization, the five agency manifestation types can also be placed on a continuum according to the extent that English language assessment policy influences teacher agency. Manifestation types 1 to 4 are characteristics found in previous research and are also found in this study, while manifestation type 5 constitutes—as far as the researcher has learned from existing literature—new findings emerged from this study. Figure 5 presents this continuum as it is

Figure 5

Five manifestation types of teacher agency as incorporated into the conceptual framework of the study



[a] Terminology taken from Priestley, Edwards, Priestley, and Miller (2012)

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incorporated into the conceptual framework of the study[9]. The furthest left-hand side of the continuum is where the policy has lesser degree of influence on teacher agency, and the furthest right-hand side of the continuum is where the policy has higher degree of influence. There is also a manifestation type that does not seem to fit into the continuum, which is placed in the dotted box. To reiterate, the first type of agency manifestation, which lies on the furthest left-hand side of the continuum, where teacher agency is not much influenced—if at all—by the policy, is “resisting or ignoring policy.” Moving slightly to the right of the continuum, the second type is “adapting policy or making ‘room for manoeuvre’” (Priestley et al., 2012). The third type on the continuum is “adopting or appropriating policy.” The fourth type, which lies on the furthest right-hand side of the continuum, where teacher agency is severely constrained or subjugated, is “strictly following policy.” Finally, the fifth type, which does not seem to fit into the continuum, is “exercising complete agency.” It is important to note that each manifestation type is context-bound and dynamic in that there are no clear-cut boundaries between the adjacent types. In addition, teachers in each type may exhibit different “strengths” of manifestation, such that, taking manifestation type 1 as an example, one teacher may display stronger resistance to the policy than does the other.

Looking at responses from the questionnaire survey and the interview together, and taking into account findings from research question 2, it is quite evident that the policy in focus of this study does exert a certain degree of direct influence on the manifestation of teacher agency. However, what seem to have more influence are the characteristics of the context in which the teachers work—which is in part influenced by the policy as well—and the characteristics of the teachers’ themselves. This is most likely why responses from the questionnaire survey show that the majority of teachers in this study feel that the policy does not affect their self-attributes. Yet, stories gathered from interview responses show that teachers are to different extents influenced by the policy, as seen in the different types of agency manifestation—ranging from those who completely exercise teacher agency out of ignorance or unawareness of the policy texts to those who found that their agency has

[9] This figure first appeared in an article published in *rEFLections*, Volume 28, Number 2, May–August, 2021 (Dhammarungruang & Wudthayagorn, 2021).

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been unknowingly restrained by the policy mandates. Thus, the speculation made by the researcher at the beginning of this section seems to be the case—that the exercise and achievement of teacher agency reported in the questionnaire survey is perhaps a result of an “unfortunate” situation forcing teachers to act on their own behalf. This also goes to show that exercise and achievement of teacher agency is contingent to various factors both personal and external to the teachers.

4.5 Chapter summary

This chapter presents findings to each of the three research questions. It may come to the reader’s attention that many pieces of research findings do not neatly fit into any one particular research question. This is indeed because factors involving and revolving around the issue of teacher agency are interwoven, intertwined, and interrelated. Consequently, it would also be difficult—if at all possible—to neatly summarize the findings presented in this chapter. The researcher therefore would like to instead reiterate key issues she has observed.

The first issue is with regard to the teachers’ awareness of the policy. As seen in the research findings, not all teachers in this study are aware of the policy, and those who are aware may not understand it in detail. This matter of awareness is related to the issues of communication (e.g., meetings or trainings on the policy are not provided), structure (e.g., priority is given to daily operational issues), and inclusion (e.g., foreign instructors do not get to be involved in policy-related matters).

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The second issue is with regard to the teachers’ interpretation of the policy. In some cases, the teachers’ interpretation of the policy is inaccurate because of the unclear wording or ambiguous terminology in the policy texts. In other cases, the teachers’ interpretation of the policy is contingent to the management’s attitude and action toward the policy. This leads teachers to interpret the policy not in terms of what the texts actually intend but in terms of whether the policy as a whole is seen in a positive or negative light (e.g., whether the teachers feel burdened to comply with the policy requirements).

The third issue is with regard to the various factors that influence how teacher agency is exercised and achieved. Even though the researcher speculates that the major influencer would be the policy, in truth, the policy is but one influencer among a web of many other influential elements. These elements consist of factors personal to individual teachers, operating as an interplay of the orientation toward the past, the orientation toward the future, and the orientation toward the present—that is, the three agentic dimensions proposed by Emirbayer and Mische (1998). At the same time, these personal factors also operate within the contingency of the ecology in which the teachers work, and—as per the ecological approach proposed by Priestley et al. (2015)—such personal and external factors, operating as an interrelated whole, enable or inhibit teacher agency. For instance, a teacher's upbringing may instill certain beliefs and wants in his or her teaching practice, but such beliefs and wants may or may not be realized depending on the culture (e.g., collegiality and collaboration) and structure (e.g., institutional management) of the workplace.

From these three issues, along with their related sub-issues, emerge varying degrees of how and how much teacher agency is exercised and achieved—that is, how teacher agency is manifested—within a given ecology. Based on the findings to this study, manifestation of teacher agency can be categorized into five types. Such manifestation ranges from teachers exercising their agency to resist the policy, to adapting the policy to fit their current practice, to adopting the policy and form new practices. There is also a manifestation type in which teacher agency is severely constrained, and teachers have to strictly follow the policy out of necessity and obligation. In contrast, there is also a manifestation type in which teachers exercise their agency freely but only because they are unaware of the policy requirements. Regardless of the manifestation type, however, it is observed that while the policy does exert some direct influence on the exercise and achievement of teacher agency, it is the factors in between and around the teachers—the factors in the three key issues remarked in this summary—that in fact exert more mediating power on whether and how much teachers can exercise and achieve agency in their respective context.

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This summary is perhaps an oversimplification of all the issues presented in this chapter. The reality certainly paints a much more complex picture. In the next chapter, Chapter 5, the researcher will attempt to discuss these intricate findings and draw key conclusions to this study.

CHAPTER V
DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

5.1 Discussion of key research findings

The discussion of key research findings is divided into two parts. The first part is the discussion pertaining to the English language assessment policy, and the second part is the discussion pertaining to teacher agency.

5.1.1 Discussion pertaining to the English language assessment policy

As can be seen from the research findings presented in Chapter 4 that, in light of the imposed English language assessment policy, the teachers in this study exercise and achieve their agency in varying degrees, and their manifestation of agency comes in various types. What piques the researcher's curiosity, however, is not only the differences themselves but also why such differences, and whether there is something to be done—or could/should be done—about it.

It is unquestionable that for a policy to be implemented, it needs to be cascaded down from policy makers to policy implementers, and this involves multi-layered communication. As mentioned in the literature review chapter of this dissertation, in any communication, all of its components—the sender, the message, the channel or means of communication, and the receiver—must be of good quality in order for the communication to be successful (Ashman, 2019; Corey, 2019). In the context of this study, the sender is the policy makers who drafted and ratified the policy in focus of this study; the message is the said policy texts; the channel or means of communication is the institutional management and the methods they use in cascading the policy down to the teachers; and the receiver is the teachers who need to implement the policy in the classroom. It can be gleaned from the research findings that differences in the manifestation of teacher agency come from matters concerning each of these communication components, which will be discussed below.

5.1.1.1 Matters concerning the sender and the message

The two components that set off the communication process are the sender and the message being sent—to reiterate, in the context of this study, these components are the policy makers and the policy texts, respectively. It is quite clear from the research findings that while teachers do see the good intention of the policy makers, they find the policy makers—the sender of the message—themselves problematic. Most teachers in this study have the impression that the policy makers possess neither classroom experience, whether teaching or otherwise, nor knowledge of the actual work context faced by teachers—an impression not unlike what a number of researchers found in Thailand over a decade ago (Fitzpatrick, 2011). It is also quite clear that the policy drafting process neither involves front-line teachers nor includes teachers' voices. Many teachers in this study expressed that they appreciated the chance to "talk it out" or reflect on their practice during the interview with the researcher. Not only did the interview conversation fondly remind them why they came into the teaching profession, but it also provided them with new insights and knowledge, especially about the policy in focus of this study. It is noteworthy—and perhaps also worrisome—that quite a few teachers had an "A-ha!" moment while reading the policy excerpt provided by the researcher. These teachers reported that they never saw or heard of the policy before but upon reading the policy excerpt could see how some of the things they were required to do could have stemmed from certain clauses of the policy. This is by no means to boast that the researcher's work is exceptional but, rather, to demonstrate that teachers' voices are rarely heard—if at all—and that teachers themselves hardly have the opportunity to hear others' voices or learn about the policy announcement, for that matter.

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Having a policy drafted by those who lack front-line knowledge and without involving those who will be implementing such a policy leads to issues in the policy texts—the message component of the communication process. In this study, the most common concern seen from both the questionnaire survey and the interview is the practicality and feasibility of the policy. Even though many teachers feel that the policy can act as a guideline, in practice, the teachers find that the policy does not provide enough details for actual use in the classroom. In addition, as the policy fails to take into account the varied and complex, if not also complicated, contexts of

English language teaching and learning in Thailand, many teachers feel that the resulting one-size-fits-all policy is neither relevant to their practice nor achievable in their situation. Indeed, a policy which assumes that teaching contexts are uniform across the nation is deemed to face challenges in its implementation, if not also resistance from its implementers—matters of which resemble what Jin et al. (2017) had offered their words of caution as a country as vast and as diverse as China was on the brink of introducing a single standardized English language framework, the China Standards of English (CSE), to its education system.

Also similar to what was found in previous research, both in Thailand and abroad (e.g., Figueras, 2012; Fitzpatrick, 2011; Zhao et al., 2017), findings from this study suggest that issues regarding clarity and detail of the policy texts are indeed prevalent. That is, the policy terminology is ill-defined, if at all, and its wording vague and subject to individual reader's interpretation, as seen from, for example, how Nigel defined "digital literacy" according to his background in software design and how Timothy equated the development of "media" to uploading class materials into an online application and providing iPads to students to access such materials. Moreover, how the policy texts are read may not always be accurate, as seen from, for instance, the misunderstanding of the CEFR level labels (e.g., that A is the highest level) due to the lack of knowledge about the framework or the confusion that surfaced when teachers read the tables in the policy. In fact, matters pertaining to interpretation of the policy is one of the most commonly documented issues regarding policy implementation in existing literature. Many prominent figures in English language education—such as Alderson (2017), Byram and Parmenter (2012a), Figueras (2012), Fulcher (2004), and Jin et al. (2017) to name a few—have long voiced their concerns, signifying the universality and persistence of this issue.

Yet, it is not surprising that such problems in policy interpretation occur because, as research findings suggest, teachers are not sufficiently provided with communication and training on policy-related matters. Without proper communication and training, teachers resort to what Coburn (2001) termed "sensemaking"—teachers using their background experience and the context in which they work to understand and interpret the policy texts and accordingly, at times selectively, implement the policy. In fact, selective implementation is closely related

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to agency manifestation type 2—adapting policy or making "room for manoeuvre"[10]—found in this study, whereby teachers pick and choose only certain aspects of the policy to implement, given the permissibility of their circumstance. Previous research, such as Jin et al. (2017) and Priestley et al. (2012), has also documented this phenomenon and speculated that such an action could have originated from the policy being regarded as difficult to follow or incongruous with personal beliefs or agenda of the teachers. Such negative perceptions on the policy—and indeed the positive ones as well—stem, at least in part, from how the policy is sent to the teachers. That is, the receiver's perception and interpretation of a message can be influenced by the channel or the means of communication, matters of which will be discussed next.

5.1.1.2 Matters concerning the channel or means of communication

As can be seen from the research findings, institutional context acts as a mediating layer between the policy and the teachers and hence serves as the channel or means of communication. Two important matters are to be touched upon in this discussion. First, findings from this study reveal that institutional management—the major channel through which the policy is passed down to the teachers—can to a great extent influence how teachers receive, perceive, and interpret the policy message. That is, institutional management's knowledge, attitude, and action toward the policy influences not only how teachers discern the policy texts but also how teachers feel about the overall policy. Such reception, perception, and interpretation of the policy in turn influences how and how much teacher agency can be exercised and achieved, as seen in the five types of agency manifestation discussed in Chapter 4.

Second, the means of communication used by the institutional management—as well as whether the teachers are or are not included in the communication loop—also influences how the policy texts and intention are conveyed, interpreted, and implemented by the teachers, and this in turn influences the exercise and achievement of teacher agency as well. As illustrated by the research findings, teachers in the same institution do not necessarily receive the same or equal amount of message, policy-related or otherwise. This gives rise to the differences in the ability of or the

[10] Terminology taken from Priestley et al. (2012)

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opportunity for teachers to realize their capacity and bring their agency into their classroom practice. Moreover, feelings of being excluded can further hinder the teachers' sense of belonging and, consequently, their achievement of agency, as seen in the case of Mathias. Such circumstances—unequal message, unequal opportunity, and unequal involvement—have been documented as hindrance to teacher agency in research dated as far back as the early 1990s (e.g., McLaughlin, 1993), despite the fact that the term teacher agency was not yet introduced into the study at that time.

Yet, in contrast to earlier research, findings from this study suggest that exclusion does not always lead to a compromise of teacher agency. For instance, some Inner Circle teachers, such as Henry and Albert, do not seem to mind the fact that they are not included in policy-related meetings because this means, as put by Henry, "fewer headaches." At the same time, because they are not meddled by policy-related matters, they can quite freely exercise their agency, fully utilizing their pedagogical beliefs in their classroom practices. There are also instances in which teachers exercise their agency quite freely, but only because they are completely oblivious of the policy requirements. This is due to the fact that their management pay no heed to the policy and therefore neither considers policy implementation a part of institutional operation nor includes policy-related matters in departmental meetings. Thus, whether teacher agency is enabled or restrained seems to be due in a larger part to the institutional management's knowledge, attitude, and action toward the policy than to the policy texts itself.

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5.1.1.3 Matters concerning the receiver

On the other side of the communication process is the teachers—the receiver of the message. Contrary to the position they hold in the communication process, teachers do not passively wait the end of the line, simply to receive the message and follow the given script. Instead, teachers are "policy actors rather than mere implementers" (Phan & Hamid, 2017, p. 52) in that, despite the policy requirements or the management's restriction, teachers possess to varying degrees characteristics that lend themselves to achieving agency in their respective context. These characteristics are teachers' inner capacity influenced by their personal dispositions or past experience, both personal (e.g., childhood upbringing) and professional (e.g., work experience in non-education fields). Still, not all such inner capacities can be put into use due, at least in the context of this study, to the limitations put forth by the ecology in which the teachers work. While some limitations may not be policy-related (e.g., mixed-ability classroom arrangement makes it infeasible for teachers to exercise certain pedagogical beliefs), some that are policy-related can be lifted or lightened through "corrective actions" on the communication components mentioned above. For example, involving and including all teachers—not simply ones with administrative roles—in policy-related meetings can enhance the teachers' sense of belonging and make them feel that their decisions and actions matter. This could in turn help teachers be and become more agentive in their given ecology.

As mentioned in the introduction of this dissertation, current literature—such as Fitzpatrick (2011) and Biesta et al. (2015), among others—finds that the blame is commonly put on the teachers when a policy is not or cannot be implemented as intended. However, it can be seen from the discussion above that an implementation of a policy is akin to a communication process. Success in communication does not come from a single communication component working in isolation. On the same token, no single communication component can be made responsible for communication that is deemed a failure. All components of the communication process must be sound and sufficient so that they work together in bringing about not only communication that is successful but also one that produces the intended results.

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5.1.2 Discussion pertaining to teacher agency

5.1.2.1 Discussion on the five types of agency manifestation

Based on common vignettes from interview responses presented in Chapter 4, manifestation of teacher agency found in this study can be categorized into five types. The discussion below is arranged according to the extent that English language assessment policy influences teacher agency—starting from a type on which the policy has lesser degree of influence to one on which the policy has higher degree of influence and ending with one to which the policy does not seem to have any relevance.

Type 1: Resisting or ignoring policy

Teachers exercising their agency to resist the policy and its mandates—termed "negative agency" by Priestley et al. (2012)—is the characteristic of teachers in type 1 of agency manifestation. As observed by Robinson (2012), an exercise or achievement of teacher agency could be as much about teachers resisting change as about teachers effecting change. Existing literature suggests that a policy mandating change can be outright contested because teachers find it difficult or impractical to put it into their practice or because doing so would mean going against their personal beliefs or values (Biesta et al., 2015; Jin et al., 2017; Sloan, 2006; Van Huy et al., 2016). In addition, Priestley et al. (2012) found that teachers with more extensive "iterational experiences" and "a well-articulated educational philosophy related to the wider purposes of education" were able to draw on these personal resources to exercise their agency to "enrich or challenge the official discourses in [the] school" (p. 209). Therefore, teachers in agency manifestation type 1 seem to be driven by the iterational dimension and the projective dimension (Emirbayer & Mische, 1998). For instance, childhood upbringing has fostered a strong sense of self in Marcy, enabling her to stand firm on her ground and resist a policy that she considers impractical to implement and unreasonable to attain. At the same time, her personal goal of what it means to be a teacher keeps her deeply committed to the teaching profession. She continuously seeks ways to bring into the classroom what is best to her students, so that they are equipped with what awaits them beyond the university campus wall.

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Type 2: Adapting policy or making "room for manoeuvre"[11]

Teachers in the second type of manifestation use agency to accommodate the policy into their practice without altering the ways things have been done in their teaching context—an action described by Priestley et al. (2012) as teachers responding to policy measures by making "room for manoeuvre" (p. 210). The characteristics of teachers in this manifestation type are similar to what Robinson (2012) found in her ethnographic study of an Australian primary school, where teachers were frustrated by new policy mandates that were in conflict with their current practices. While these teachers neither resisted the policy nor shunned changes, they also believed that

[11] Terminology taken from Priestley et al. (2012)

neither the policy nor the changes should happen “at the cost of ignoring or subordinating values and practices which were an essential part of the school’s educational philosophy” (Robinson, 2012, p. 241). With this firmly-held shared values, the teachers collaborated and demonstrated agency by complying with certain aspects of the policy while circumventing others, so as to meet the policy requirement while, at the same time, preserving the school’s long-standing values and practices. Interestingly, this practice of selective implementation of the policy was also reported by Prabjandee (2019), who found that secondary school teachers in an eastern province of Thailand “exercise[d] their agency to selectively implement some policy messages” (p. 223) and “[were] able to manage a space for exercising their agency in order to deal with the tension arising during the implementation…[and] conform with the policy as long as it would be beneficial to their students” (p. 239). Hence, findings from Prabjandee (2019) also show that teachers’ selection of which policy aspects to implement was based upon their interpretation of policy texts in relation to their teaching context as well as their professional values and practices—most notably their strong commitment to, and their top priority on, their students’ best interest.

Type 3: Adopting or appropriating policy

The third type of agency manifestation is characterized by teachers taking in the policy and bringing out their agency to work together to form new practices. While some literature, such as Robinson (2012) and Johnson and Johnson (2015), discusses the action of teachers adopting or appropriating the policy into their practice, previous literature does not seem to have found complete adoption. Particularly, the researcher has not yet come across literature which reports an alignment between the national policy and the institutional policy and, in which case, an exercise of teacher agency that enhances the achievement of both policies, as has been found in this study’s agency manifestation type 3. The researcher is cautious to make any claims, however, that such discovery is one-of-a-kind, as there may be similar instances that have yet to be explored or reported. Still, the researcher must note that this type of agency manifestation is unique to a certain extent because, even in this study, teachers from only two institutions—one public, one private—belong to this manifestation type.

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Type 4: Strictly following policy

In agency manifestation type 4, the exercise and achievement of teacher agency is limited by the policy pressure that is passed down from the management to the teachers. In contrast to agency manifestation type 3, agency manifestation type 4 is perhaps most commonly found in existing literature. In fact, most literature on teacher agency reports that agency of teachers is constrained in some ways or to some degree due to the necessity for policy compliance. For example, Ollerhead (2010) found the achievement of teacher agency to be contingent on teachers' perceptions of policy demands. Priestley et al. (2012) found that while some aspects of the ecology enhanced teacher agency, some inhibited it, such as a system that evaluated teachers through students' exam results, thus forcing teachers to give up their pedagogical beliefs for teaching by the book. Liyanage et al. (2015) similarly found how the national entrance examination in China deterred teachers from exercising their agency because teachers felt obligated to teach to the test so as to help students pass the exam. In a similar vein, Van Huy and Hamid (2015) and Van Huy et al. (2016) reported how policy dumping—an abrupt enactment of policy taken directly from other countries—caught teachers unprepared and left them confused, thus compromising teacher agency. Yet, even though the teachers in this manifestation type do not agree with what they are required to do, they lack the power to resist the demands of the management and the policy. Consequently, the teachers have to give in to the circumstance and, to a considerable extent, give up their agency.

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Type 5: Exercising complete agency due to lack of policy awareness

The fifth type of agency manifestation is characterized by teachers not following the policy, due not to resistance or ignorance of policy but to lack of policy awareness. This manifestation type is interesting not only because it does not seem to fit into the continuum of policy influence as do manifestation types 1 to 4 (see Figure 5) but also because, similar to agency manifestation type 3, it does not seem to have been reported elsewhere. Once again, the researcher is cautious of claiming uniqueness. It can be presumed that past research may have screened participants based on awareness or knowledge of the policy, recruiting only those who are aware or knowledgeable. However, for this study, the researcher did not use awareness or knowledge of policy as screening criteria because she wanted the pool of participants to reflect the reality.

As presented in the research findings, the primary factor of influence for teachers in this manifestation type is the complete lack of communication of or attention to policy in the workplace. The priority seems to be given instead to short-term, day-to-day operational issues. While such a mentality may not be intrinsic to the teachers, the work culture or the urgency of the matters pushes the teachers toward this short-term orientation. Indeed, existing literature suggests that a lack of attention to the policy in the workplace could possibly give rise to a short-term mentality in the work culture, as Biesta et al. (2015) and Priestley et al. (2015) noted how teachers who lack a clear vision of education tend to focus only on the here-and-now of the situation. Nonetheless, with the intention to take action in the best interest of their students, many of these teachers exercise agency in the way that Hiver and Whitehead (2018) described as "[acting] intentionally within the complex teaching contexts in which they are situated and to make a deliberate difference in that setting" (p. 78). That is, the teachers in this manifestation type exercise agency by coming up with their own strategy to resolve the daily matters to the best of their ability—and, once again, in the best interest of their students—even without the knowledge of the policy requirement.

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Even though this study categorizes teacher agency into five types of manifestation, it must be noted that such categorization is not—and cannot be—set in stone. This is because the research findings also reveal that, for some teachers, who they are may not always reflect in how they act, and this is more often than not out of the inevitability of the circumstance. For instance, while Marcy, who belongs to agency manifestation type 1, openly resists the policy, she would in some cases adapt (agency manifestation type 2) or adopt (agency manifestation type 3) the policy—albeit not voluntarily and not willingly—in order to meet her management's expectations as well as to help her students pass the exam. On the other hand, while Mitch, who belongs to agency manifestation type 4, must comply strictly to the policy as per his management's demands, he would at times find his own way to make adaptation in class lessons (agency manifestation type 2) to help his students learn better. Therefore, even though the research findings may suggest five different types of manifestation of teacher agency, these five types are not mutually exclusive, and no exact boundaries can be drawn between each type, as teachers' thoughts are fluid and actions malleable depending on the circumstance. This is in line with what Fuchs (2001) proffered—that the concept of agency is not fixed but must rather be thought of as "one of degree—as a continuum on which things social move over time" (p. 26) and as "variations along a continuum" (p. 39). Fuchs's (2001) account is indeed evident in this study, as shown in how teachers belonging to a certain manifestation type are ready to move to other manifestation types when the situation requires, especially when it comes to the benefit of their students.

Given the dynamics of the manifestation of teacher agency discussed above, it must as well be noted that there is no one "best" type of manifestation. This is because teacher agency is context-bound, and what is considered "best" would thus depend on the circumstance. The case of Mitch can also illustrate this. Although Mitch said of the shortcomings of having the policy governing almost every aspect of the English courses in his institution and that every teacher of the same course must strictly adhere to what the syllabus dictates, Mitch did mention that there is an advantage of having every teacher follow the same guideline. This is because all teachers are now on the same page—teaching the same thing and testing the same thing. Prior to the policy, reported Mitch, each teacher would work independently, creating his or her own teaching materials, assignments, and even assessments. As such, there were problems of different class sections of the same course covering different materials and using different tests. By having every teacher teaching and testing the same thing, the advantages are (1) teachers of the same course can communicate and collaborate better; (2) students within the same course get to learn the same content; and (3) tests and assessments are fairer. Therefore, strictly following the policy does not necessarily lead to negative outcomes. It may in fact be quite beneficial to institutions that are unorganized. The policy can help straighten things up for a start. Yet, it is possible that the teachers would feel unhappy to have their agency restricted and their freedom taken away. Indeed, the research findings suggest that teachers feel dissatisfied with situations in which they are forced to do or are prohibited from doing certain things. However, this dissatisfaction arises mainly

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because the teachers are not told why, which is also a problem reported in existing literature, such as Biesta et al. (2015), and is somewhat akin to policy dumping on a local scale. Such discontentment could be alleviated, the researcher believes, through proper communication from the management, explaining why things have to be done in a certain manner. Should the teachers be explained the reasons or clarified of the rationale, they would be happier and could exercise their agency in the given context, no matter which type of agency manifestation they fall into. Then, once the institutional structure is in place, the management could migrate to other types of agency manifestation as would be appropriate to the situation at hand.

Thus, it is unnecessary for policy makers or institutional management to search and aim for the "best" type of agency manifestation. The context of the institution is the key determinant of which manifestation type would be considered most favorable. When the situation changes, so would the favorable manifestation type. What is necessary, however, is a sound communication process to help teachers understand their context and bring out their capacity to exercise and achieve their teacher agency in their respected ecology.

5.1.2.2 Discussion on the factors that contribute to or influence the manifestation of teacher agency

Manifestation or achievement of teacher agency in the context of this study is influenced by varying extent of personal and external factors, as suggested in the research findings and existing literature. The research findings thus fit the research framework. Additionally, this study has also found that manifestation of teacher agency appears to be contingent not only on multiple factors but also on multiple layers of influence, which is consistent with what Hornberger, Tapia, Hanks, Dueñas, and Lee (2018) found and termed the "multilayered nature" of language policy implementation (p. 178). In the context of this study, the structural environment—such as the culture, regulation, or stewardship (or lack thereof) of the institution—acts as a layer between the English language assessment policy and the teachers. Therefore, the exercise and achievement of agency by the teachers in this study seems to depend not as much on the direct demands of the policy mandates as on the fact that the teachers' personal dispositions are mediated—or subjugated—by their

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structural environment, hence resulting in the five manifestation types of teacher agency as illustrated in the research findings. Mediation of teachers' personal dispositions—and eventually actions—as a result of structural environment has also been documented by Coburn (2004), whose study reported that "teachers' connections to the institutional environment create a powerful framework within which teachers exercise agency" (p. 214). Notably, Coburn (2004) found that

> pressures from the environment became occasions for social negotiation and interpretation in an iterative process that unfolded over time…[T]he teachers mediated pressures from the environment, constructing responses by drawing on their preexisting worldviews and practices…[T]he teachers used their beliefs…as well as taken-for-granted understandings…to select, interpret, and enact new approaches in the context of their existing [classroom practice]. (p. 220)

The importance of the structural context to the achievement of teacher agency is also reported by van der Heijden, Beijaard, Geldens, and Popeijus (2018). Analyzing survey data from 1,000 teachers in the Netherlands, the authors found that "participative decision-making" and "vision building" are the most pertinent characteristics of the structural context that empower teachers to perceive themselves as agents of change (van der Heijden et al., 2018, p. 359). The authors also noted that "supportive school contexts are important for enabling teachers to act as change agent," with "leadership behavior" being key to the success (van der Heijden et al., 2018, p. 365).

Findings from this study reflect those found by Coburn (2004) and van der Heijden et al. (2018) in that teachers in this study do not seem to be directly affected by the enactment of the policy. Rather, they are affected by how—as well as how severely or how strictly—the institutional management passes down the policy to them. Thus, even though it is the same policy being passed down, there are differences in the degree that the teachers need to wade, if not also fight, their way through their institutional management to exercise their agency. It is even more interesting to see that teachers in similar types of institutions (at times within the same institution), but of different nationalities, may not necessarily have to undergo the same level of mediation or subjugation, as seen from the vignettes of Ganda and

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Henry, who exemplify agency manifestation type 5. In contrast, teachers from different institutions, regardless of nationalities, may undergo similar levels of dispositional negotiation—both personal and professional—when their institutional management is of similar mentality, as seen from the vignettes of Kasem and Miranda, who exemplify agency manifestation type 2. It can therefore be gleaned from the findings of this study that manifestation, hence achievement, of teacher agency is dependent and contingent on the interaction and influence within the ecology that is both multi-factor and multi-layer.

5.2 Limitations of the study and suggestion for future research

As Erten and Tekin (2008) have aptly put it, "[b]efore drawing any conclusions, some limitations of the study need to be acknowledged" (p. 418). With regard to this study, the researcher would like to first and foremost point out the nature of the participating teachers. While this may not be considered a limitation *per se*, it should be noted that the sampling method used in this study—purposive sampling with a snowballing technique—could have resulted in inclusion (as well as exclusion) of participants with certain characteristics. For instance, it is possible that only teachers who are relatively outspoken were willing to participate. Additionally, the profile of the participants in this study—that as many as 43% of the total participants are in the age group of 40–49 and that all but two of the Outer Circle teachers are from the Philippines (see Table 4 and Table 5)—could have also been influenced by the sampling method, as the snowballing technique oftentimes involves referral of friends or close acquaintances, and such friends and acquaintances tend to be of similar age or of the same nationality.

Second, there were instances during data collection in which information could not be fully obtained from the participants due to unexpected circumstances—some participants arrived late to the interview, some declined to answer certain questions, and some were interrupted by colleagues or students. All of such cases rendered the interview incomplete, and in a few cases the interview had to be terminated altogether. Thus, although the research findings reveal different degrees of agency being achieved among the study's pool of participants, it is possible that such findings could be biased to a certain extent, and much may still be concealed as the researcher cannot tap into the unheard voices.

The next limitation concerns the duration of time within which the study was conducted. In spite of the recommendation provided by various literature that research on teacher agency be conducted longitudinally—as data collected only at one point in time cannot sufficiently reveal the nuances in the formation and transformation of teacher agency—the limited time and human resources made it impractical for the researcher to do as the literature recommends. The researcher concurs with existing literature and would as well suggest that should more resources be available, the data collection process of future research could span over a longer period of time, utilize more research instruments—such as classroom observation, think aloud, and analysis of class materials or syllabus—and encompass more elements that were unfortunately had to be missed in this study.

One such element that would be of value to study in future research is an observation of how the policy is disseminated from its origin to the front-line implementers—for example, the path and means of dissemination as well as the time it takes to complete the whole dissemination process. This is a crucial point stressed by Van Huy et al. (2016), in that understanding how “actors [policy implementers] engage in the policy enactment process” (p. 69) is important because it is through this process that policy implementers such as teachers interpret policy texts and transform them into action, hence determining the extent that policy implementation is considered successful. Another related element to study would be how much and how widely—in essence, how inclusive—policy information is disseminated. As shown in the research findings, it is not always the case that teachers in the same institution always receive the same amount of policy information. This mishap seems to be persistent, because almost three decades ago this is also what McLaughlin (1993) found—that “teachers who work literally across the hall from one another but work in different departments experience their workplace in critically different ways” (p. 92). While McLaughlin (1993) suggested that this largely stems from bureaucracy and culture of each department in the institution, findings of this study also reveal factors that could additionally be at play. For instance, teachers’ nationality or (lack of) administrative role can preclude them from having a chance to be involved in policy-

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related matters. Such treatment thereby excludes these teachers from the communication loop and influences how and how much they can exercise and achieve teacher agency. Thus, it would be beneficial for future research to obtain a clearer picture and better understanding of the policy dissemination process and to see which aspects could or should be maintained and which could or should be improved. Relevant stakeholders could then find out ways that the policy can be disseminated effectively and comprehensively, leading to implementation that is as intended by the policy makers and at the same time not at the expense of teacher agency.

Another element that would be of great value to further understand teacher agency is to investigate how teacher agency changes over time and across contexts. As agency is contingent to the ecology in which it is exhibited, it can be assumed that achievement and manifestation of agency would change as time passes—e.g., as a person grows older or gains more experience—or as contexts shift—e.g., as a new management team takes office or a new policy takes effect. In fact, Coburn (2004) suggested that teachers' interpretation of received messages—be it policy texts or otherwise—is "recursive" and "incremental" (p. 214). Initially, teachers use their preexisting personal dispositions, such as beliefs or past experiences, to interpret received messages and take action accordingly. Over time, such interpretations and actions become routinized and eventually turn into an additional set of preexisting personal dispositions upon and through which newer messages are interpreted (Coburn, 2004). This process in turn leads to changes in teacher agency. Indeed, teacher agency is not a once-and-for-all phenomenon, and thus research on such a matter certainly should not and cannot be a once-and-for-all undertaking.

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5.2.1 Matter on the need for a longitudinal study

With the limitation of time and resources, this study could document teacher agency only at the time of the data collection. As suggested at various points earlier in this dissertation, agency is a process, rather than a product, and is dependent on the ecology in which it is manifested. Hence, it is possible that agency can change over time and in lieu of the ever-changing context in which teachers work. It is therefore recommended that future research employ longitudinal study on this particular topic, so as to see if and how teacher agency changes over time and across contexts. For example, in this study, there are a few instances in which "unaware" teachers reacted quite strongly to the policy once they knew about it through the provided policy excerpts. It is suspected that, for these teachers, now that they are aware of the policy, their interaction with their work context and, consequently, their achievement of teacher agency could be different from the time that they had no knowledge of the policy. At the very least, their perception toward the policy has changed, and perception—as discussed earlier in this chapter—can very much influence how teacher agency is exercised and, thus, achieved.

5.2.2 Matter on other factors that can influence teacher agency

Another suggestion for future research is to study teacher agency in light of other factors in the ecology. In this study, the focus is on how English language assessment policy influences the achievement of teacher agency. However, as can be seen from the teachers' stories reported earlier in this dissertation, the policy is not the only thing that influences teacher agency, nor is it influencing teacher agency only in a direct manner. The policy indeed influences other elements of the ecology, such as the institutional policy, the attitude and actions of institutional management, and even the actions of the students, all of which act as intermediary factors between the policy and the teachers and in turn influence teacher agency. In addition, the researcher found that there are also other non-policy-related factors that influence teacher agency, such as class size, class section arrangement, or students' attention span. For instance, students' short attention span negatively affects the students' motivation to learn and willingness to cooperate in class. Teachers thus have difficulties in classroom management, which in turn affect the achievement of their teacher agency. Future research can therefore tab into the influence of these non-policy-related aspects by studying how these factors—in and of themselves or in combination with policy-related factors—influence how teacher agency is exercised and achieved.

5.3 Implications of the study and conclusion

This study portrays how agency of English teachers is manifested within the context of English language assessment policy for higher education in Thailand. As has been discussed among scholars of many disciplines in which the concept of human agency

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has been applied, several factors are at play when agency is to be discerned. First and foremost, as per Emirbayer and Mische (1998) and Priestley et al. (2015), it is imperative that the whole ecology be taken into account. That is, an investigation on agency need to consider not only factors residing within an individual but also those surrounding him or her, and all such factors must be looked at as an interplay, not as discrete constituents. Another important point to take note from Emirbayer and Mische (1998) and Priestley et al. (2015) is that agency is a phenomenon that is dynamic—a process, not a product—and is contingent on the structural and temporal contexts in which it is manifested. Therefore, to see how the dynamics unveil, research on agency would be better studied over a period of time.

While the researcher tried her best to be as comprehensive as possible in framing and executing this study according to the notions put forth by Emirbayer and Mische (1998) and Priestley et al. (2015), this study is still not without limitations, as discussed in the section above. The researcher acknowledges such limitations, yet hopes that this study has made contributions to the field of English language education in theoretical as well as practical fronts.

In terms of theoretical significance, it is hoped that findings from this study would help enhance understanding of the concept of teacher agency in the context of English language education in Thailand. Such an understanding is crucial because it is the first step to cultivating a sense of agency in teachers. As discussed in the beginning chapters of this dissertation, current literature suggests that teacher agency is recognized as an attribute that could instill change in the education system. This is because teachers who are agentive are more in control of their teaching context, more reflexive, and therefore more able to adjust their teaching content and methods as the circumstances change and progress (Pantić, 2015). Agentive teachers also take ownership of their practice and strive for excellence not only in students' performance but also in their own (Pantić, 2015). Thus, teacher agency could lead not only to better teachers but also to better education outcomes. That said, as there is a wide range of nationalities of English teachers presently teaching in Thai educational institutions of all levels, it is important to understand what constitutes agency of these teachers—how and how much their agency is enabled, constrained, exercised, achieved, and in the end translated into the quality of English language education.

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In terms of practical significance, it is hoped that better understanding of teacher agency in the context of English language education in Thailand could be beneficial to policy stakeholder of every level—from policy makers at the national level, to policy administrators at the institutional level, to policy implementers such as teachers at the classroom level. For instance, future policy planning and drafting could take voices of these English teachers into consideration or, better yet, involve teacher representatives in the policy-making processes so as to formulate a more practical and implementable policy that can better serve the needs of all involved in the English language teaching and learning in Thailand.

Besides taking in voices of the teachers, it is equally important to enable the teachers to develop such voices—that is, to provide them with professional development. As Kirkpatrick and Liddicoat (2017) found, lack of qualified teachers is one of the key issues leading to unsuccessful language policy implementation. Thus, professional development programs can and should be arranged—either at the national level or at the institutional level or both—not only to communicate the policy texts but also to provide the knowledge and skills necessary for policy implementation. It may also be necessary to instill the knowledge of agency in the teachers, as many teachers are unaware or do not realize that they are capable of exercising agency in their teaching context. Such professional development programs could be designed in accordance with the teachers' nationality or English language background for optimum relevance and applicability.

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In addition, institutional management could also help to encourage the creation and sustenance of an ecology that would enhance the achievement of teacher agency in the classroom as well as in the institution on the whole. For instance, as seen from the research findings, teachers in agency manifestation type 4 seem to be working in an environment where the structural context is severely restrictive, and the teachers are supposedly too tired or too hopeless to fight the rip current and simply give in or give up. The researcher believes that had these teachers been working in a different environment where the management were more supportive—where the teachers were included in meetings, given enough information, and encouraged to get involved in policy-related matters—they would have been able to bring out their agency and take action even in such a limiting ecology.

Action, indeed, is what necessitates success of policy implementation. Disregarding what is written in the policy texts, for policy implementation to be successful, teachers must be on board. In other words, teachers must exercise agency in the form of taking actions toward what the policy asks of them rather than in the form of refraining from action by resisting or ignoring the policy. This is how teacher agency could lead to the success of policy implementation.

Even so, as discussed in the paragraphs above, the ecology must also be favorable for teachers to bring about such actions. In the course of compiling the findings from this study, the researcher came to realize that, while several pieces of information may not be completely new to policy makers or policy administrators, this study could serve as a formal documentation of the insights into the “reality” faced by a number of English teachers in higher education institutions. This documentation is by no means an account of criticisms. Although the general public may have the impression that policy makers and policy administrators are evil, such view is not always the case. As seen from the research findings, all teachers who participated in this study offer positive views on the policy. They acknowledge that the fact that there is a policy on English language education and assessment means that the government places high importance on English and that English is considered crucial to the development of the country. However, it is in the detail and the process that the policy becomes problematic. Namely, policy makers and policy administrators need to recognize the reality and understand that it is neither possible nor practical to issue a one-size-fits-all policy, pass it down to the institutions, and expect that institutional management and teachers can enact the policy all by themselves.

Therefore, the researcher hopes that findings from this study would help point out aspects of improvement that could make policy implementation more favorable to the exercise and achievement of teacher agency—potentially enhancing the success of policy implementation. For example, as suggested by one participant, there could be a teachers’ handbook accompanying the policy text, explaining not only what the policy requires but also how teachers can apply the policy into their classroom practices. With the implications detailed above, the researcher thus hopes that this study would be of particular value to policy makers and policy administrators—whether those at

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the national level or those at the institutional level—and that, in the end, the ecology of English language teaching, learning, and assessment in Thailand would present a better alignment of policy rhetoric and professional reality.

Such hope may be far-flung but, if and once realized, could lead to a far-reaching positive impact on English teachers, who are the key agents not only in the implementation of the English language assessment policy but also in the advancement of the overall English language education in Thailand.

5.4 Chapter summary

This final chapter of the dissertation discusses critical issues emerged from the research findings and provides insights gleaned from such findings. It starts off with a discussion pertaining to the English language assessment policy in focus of this study, touching on matters relating to the components that would make policy implementation successful or otherwise—namely, the policy makers, the policy texts, the institutional management and the methods used in cascading the policy down to the teachers, and the teachers themselves. The chapter then moves on to a discussion pertaining to teacher agency. This section further elaborates on the five types of agency manifestation introduced in Chapter 4, touching on the characteristics of as well as the factors that contribute to, or influence, each manifestation type.

This chapter also details limitations of the study, offers recommendations for future research, delineates how this study could be of value to the field of English language education in both theoretical and practical fronts, and finally poses concluding remarks. This dissertation, hence, has drawn to a close.

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APPENDICES

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Appendix A
Excerpt of the policy documents in focus of this study (original Thai text)

<u>นโยบายการศึกษาที่เกี่ยวข้องกับการวัดและประเมินผลภาษาอังกฤษในระดับอุดมศึกษา</u>

<u>นโยบาย 1: แผนการศึกษาแห่งชาติ</u>[12]

บทที่ 4 วิสัยทัศน์และเป้าหมายของแผนการศึกษาแห่งชาติ
ข้อ 4.7 ตัวชี้วัดตามเป้าหมายของแผนการศึกษาแห่งชาติ
แผนการศึกษาแห่งชาติ พ.ศ. 2560–2579 ได้กำหนดเป้าหมายการพัฒนาการศึกษา ดังนี้

ตาราง 14 ตัวชี้วัดตามเป้าหมายของแผนการศึกษาแห่งชาติ

ตัวชี้วัด (เป้าหมายด้านคุณภาพการศึกษา)	**ปัจจุบัน**	**ปีที่ 1–5**	**ปีที่ 6–10**	**ปีที่ 11–15**	**ปีที่ 16–20**
5) ระดับความสามารถด้านการใช้ภาษาอังกฤษเฉลี่ยของผู้สำเร็จการศึกษาในแต่ละระดับ เมื่อทดสอบตามมาตรฐานความสามารถทางภาษาอังกฤษ (CEFR[13]) สูงขึ้น (ระดับมัธยมศึกษาตอนต้น/ระดับมัธยมศึกษาตอนปลาย/ระดับปริญญาตรี)	A1/A2/B2	A1/A2/B2	A2/B1/B2+	B1/B1+/C1	B2/B2/C1+

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[12] แผนการศึกษาแห่งชาติ พ.ศ. 2560–2579 จัดทำโดย สำนักงานเลขาธิการสภาการศึกษา กระทรวงศึกษาธิการ (หน้า 82, 84, 150, 155, 156, 163)

[13] The Common European Framework of Reference for Languages

บทที่ 6 การขับเคลื่อนแผนการศึกษาแห่งชาติสู่การปฏิบัติ
การขับเคลื่อนยุทธศาสตร์ที่ 2: การผลิตและพัฒนากำลังคน การวิจัย และนวัตกรรม เพื่อสร้างขีดความสามารถในการแข่งขันของประเทศ
บทบาทของหน่วยงานระดับต่างๆ ในการขับเคลื่อนยุทธศาสตร์ที่ 2 สู่การปฏิบัติ

ตาราง 18 บทบาทของหน่วยงานระดับต่างๆ ในการขับเคลื่อนยุทธศาสตร์ที่ 2 สู่การปฏิบัติ

ระดับ	หน่วยงาน	รับผิดชอบดำเนินการ
สถานศึกษา	• **สถาบันการศึกษาในระดับอาชีวศึกษาและอุดมศึกษา** • **หน่วยงานอื่นที่จัดการศึกษาระดับอาชีวศึกษาและอุดมศึกษา**	7) พัฒนาและประเมินความสามารถด้านภาษาอังกฤษตามกรอบ CEFR ของผู้เรียนและบัณฑิต 9) พัฒนาทักษะการใช้ภาษาอังกฤษและทักษะดิจิทัลของผู้เรียน

การขับเคลื่อนยุทธศาสตร์ที่ 3: การพัฒนาศักยภาพคนทุกช่วงวัย และการสร้างสังคมแห่งการเรียนรู้
บทบาทของหน่วยงานระดับต่างๆ ในการขับเคลื่อนยุทธศาสตร์ที่ 3 สู่การปฏิบัติ

ตาราง 19 บทบาทของหน่วยงานระดับต่างๆ ในการขับเคลื่อนยุทธศาสตร์ที่ 3 สู่การปฏิบัติ

ระดับ	หน่วยงาน	รับผิดชอบดำเนินการ
สถานศึกษา	**ทุกสังกัด**	9) จัดการเรียนรู้และประเมินความสามารถด้านการใช้ภาษาอังกฤษตามมาตรฐานความสามารถด้านภาษาอังกฤษ (CEFR)

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<u>นโยบาย 2: นโยบายการยกระดับมาตรฐานภาษาอังกฤษในสถาบันอุดมศึกษา</u>

ประกาศคณะกรรมการการอุดมศึกษา
เรื่อง นโยบายการยกระดับมาตรฐานภาษาอังกฤษในสถาบันอุดมศึกษา

ด้วยรัฐบาลมีนโยบายด้านการศึกษาและการเรียนรู้ โดยจัดให้มีการปฏิรูปการศึกษาและการเรียนรู้เพื่อสร้างคุณภาพของคนไทยให้สามารถเรียนรู้ พัฒนาตนได้เต็มตามศักยภาพ และรัฐมนตรีว่าการกระทรวงศึกษาธิการมีนโยบายยกระดับมาตรฐานภาษาอังกฤษในทุกหลักสูตร เพื่อพัฒนาการเรียนการสอนภาษาอังกฤษ ให้ผู้เรียนมีความรู้ความสามารถใช้ภาษาอังกฤษเป็นเครื่องมือศึกษาค้นคว้าองค์ความรู้ที่เป็นสากลและก้าวทันโลก เพื่อรองรับการเข้าสู่ประชาคมอาเซียน และการเพิ่มขีดความสามารถในการแข่งขันของประเทศต่อไป

อาศัยอำนาจตามความในมาตรา ๑๖ แห่งพระราชบัญญัติระเบียบบริหารราชการกระทรวงศึกษาธิการ พ.ศ. ๒๕๔๖ คณะกรรมการการอุดมศึกษาในการประชุมครั้งที่ ๓/๒๕๕๙ เมื่อวันที่ ๒๒ มีนาคม ๒๕๕๙ จึงออกประกาศคณะกรรมการการอุดมศึกษา เรื่อง นโยบายการยกระดับมาตรฐานภาษาอังกฤษในสถาบันอุดมศึกษา ไว้ดังต่อไปนี้

ข้อ ๑ ให้สถาบันอุดมศึกษากำหนดนโยบายและเป้าหมายการยกระดับมาตรฐานภาษาอังกฤษในสถาบันอุดมศึกษา ในทุกหลักสูตรและทุกระดับการศึกษา เพื่อเป็นแนวทางในการพัฒนาทักษะความสามารถการใช้ภาษาอังกฤษของนิสิตนักศึกษาให้เป็นบัณฑิตที่มีความพร้อมทั้งวิชาการ วิชาชีพ และทักษะการสื่อสารภาษาอังกฤษในระดับที่ใช้งานได้ (Working Knowledge)

ข้อ ๒ ให้สถาบันอุดมศึกษาจัดทำแผนเพื่อดำเนินการให้เป็นไปตามนโยบายและเป้าหมายโดยมีตัวชี้วัดและมีการประเมินผลที่ชัดเจน

ข้อ ๓ ให้สถาบันอุดมศึกษาพิจารณาปรับปรุงการจัดการเรียนการสอนในรายวิชาภาษาอังกฤษโดยมุ่งผลสัมฤทธิ์ตามเป้าหมายที่กำหนด

ข้อ ๔ ให้สถาบันอุดมศึกษาพิจารณาการจัดกิจกรรมนอกหลักสูตร กระบวนการ สื่อ และ/หรือสิ่งแวดล้อม ที่จะเปิดโอกาสและเสริมแรงจูงใจให้นิสิตนักศึกษาสามารถพัฒนาทักษะการใช้ภาษาอังกฤษได้ด้วยตนเอง

ข้อ ๕ ให้สถาบันอุดมศึกษาพิจารณาจัดให้นิสิตนักศึกษาทุกคน ทดสอบความรู้ภาษาอังกฤษตามแบบทดสอบมาตรฐานระดับอุดมศึกษาที่สถาบันสร้างขึ้น หรือที่เห็นสมควรจะนำมาใช้วัดสมิทธิภาพทางภาษาอังกฤษ (English Proficiency) โดยสามารถเทียบเคียงผลกับ Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) หรือมาตรฐานอื่น เพื่อให้ทราบระดับความสามารถของนิสิตนักศึกษาแต่ละคน และสถาบันอุดมศึกษาอาจพิจารณานำผลการทดสอบความรู้ทางภาษาอังกฤษบันทึกในใบรับรองผลการศึกษาหรือจัดทำเป็นประกาศนียบัตร โดยเริ่มตั้งแต่ปีการศึกษา ๒๕๕๙ เป็นต้นไป

ประกาศ ณ วันที่ ๑๒ เมษายน พ.ศ. ๒๕๕๙

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ประธานกรรมการ
คณะกรรมการอุดมศึกษา

Appendix B

Excerpt of the policy documents in focus of this study (translated English text)

Thailand's national policy pertaining to English language assessment in higher education

Policy 1: National Education Plan[14]

Chapter 4 Vision and goals of the National Education Plan

Clause 4.7 Key performance indicators for the goals of the National Education Plan

The National Education Plan B.E. 2560–2579 designates goals for education development as follows

Table 14 Key performance indicators for the goals of the National Education Plan

Key performance indicator (quality of education)	**Current**	**Years 1–5**	**Years 6–10**	**Years 11–15**	**Years 16–20**
5) Increase in the average English proficiency level of graduates of different education levels when measured against the CEFR[15] (junior secondary education [*matthayom ton*] / senior secondary education [*matthayom plai*] / higher education [bachelor's degree equivalent])	A1/A2/B2	A1/A2/B2	A2/B1/B2+	B1/B1+/C1	B2/B2/C1+

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[14] National Education Plan B.E. 2560–2579 (2017–2036 C.E.) published by the Office of the Education Council, Ministry of Education (pp. 82, 84, 150, 155, 156, 163)
[15] The Common European Framework of Reference for Languages

Chapter 6 Key drivers for the National Education Plan
Strategy 2: Driving human resource development, research, and innovation in order to enhance the country's competitive advantage

Table 18 Action plan for department and sub-division in order to drive Strategy 2

Level	Department and sub-division	Responsibility
Education institution	• Vocational and higher education institutions • Other departments or sub-divisions responsible for management of vocational and higher education	7) Develop and assess English language proficiency of students and graduates according to the CEFR 9) Develop English language skills and digital literacy of students

Strategy 3: Developing learning potential of people of all ages and creating a learning society

Table 19 Action plan for department and sub-division in order to drive Strategy 3

Level	Department and sub-division	Responsibility
Education institution	All departments and sub-divisions	9) Develop English language classes and assess English language proficiency and skills of learners according to the CEFR

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<u>Policy 2: Policy to upgrade English proficiency standards of higher education graduates</u>

Announced by: The Office of the Higher Education Commission, Ministry of Education

Announced on: April 12, 2016

Clause 1: Higher education institutions are to set institutional policy and goals to upgrade [raise] English language proficiency standards in all curricula and at all degree levels. Such policy and goals are to be used in cultivating English language skills of students so that they are not only equipped with academic knowledge and professional knowledge but also able to communicate effectively in English.

Clause 2: Higher education institutions are to set action plan to execute their institutional policy and achieve their institutional goals. Such execution and achievement are to be assessed by clear key performance indicators and evaluation process.

Clause 3: Higher education institutions are to adjust their English language curricula and pedagogy so as to achieve their institutional goals.

Clause 4: Higher education institutions are to develop extracurricular activities, processes, media, and/or environment that are conducive to learning and using English and, eventually, to improving students' English language proficiency level.

Clause 5: Higher education institutions are to consider assessing the English proficiency of all students by using an institutionally-developed English proficiency test, or other appropriate English proficiency tests, whose results can be equated with the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) or other similar language standards, so as to gauge the English language ability of each student. Additionally, higher education institutions may consider reporting results from such English proficiency test on the student's transcript or issuing a result certificate to the student. This practice is to be in effect from B.E. 2559 [2016 C.E.] academic year onward.

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Appendix C

Questionnaire survey

Questionnaire survey for a Ph.D. dissertation titled
English language assessment policy and agency of English teachers in Thailand

Introduction[16]	
Objectives	1. To provide participants with a brief information on the questionnaire survey 2. To reassure participants of their anonymity and withdrawal options (a separate research information sheet and consent form were provided along with the questionnaire survey) 3. To instruct the participants how to fill out the questionnaire survey

Introduction

This questionnaire is part of a research titled *English language assessment policy and agency of English teachers in Thailand*, which is a Ph.D. dissertation under the English as an International Language Program at Chulalongkorn University.

As participant, you will remain anonymous throughout the research process and publication of the research results.

Your name and contact information will be known only to the researcher and kept strictly confidential. The researcher will contact you for further inquiry only if you indicate your willingness for such purpose (by filling out the form at the end of this questionnaire).

Should you wish, you may withdraw yourself or any of your information from this research at any time without the need to give reasons and without consequences of any sort.

Thank you for your time and your contribution to this research.

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[16] All texts and tables in blue are for reader's reference only and were not present in actual instrument.

<u>Instructions for filling out the questionnaire</u>

Please answer the questions by writing your response in the given space or making an "X" in the boxes that correspond to your answer.

Please note that this questionnaire is <u>printed on both sides</u>.

Examples:

1) Did you participate in any team sports while in college/university?

0 ☐ No

1 ☒ Yes Please specify *volleyball, floor hockey*

For Q2, please rate your agreement on the below statements by making an "X" in the boxes, where

1 = Strongly disagree
2 = Somewhat disagree
3 = Neither agree nor disagree
4 = Somewhat agree
5 = Strongly agree.

	Strongly disagree				Strongly agree
2) What are your opinions toward participation in team sports?	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**
2a. Participation in team sports helps develop self-discipline.				X	
2b. Participation in team sports takes away time for academic studies.		X			
2c. All students should be encouraged to participate in team sports.			X		

*****

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As a starter, please think about one particular undergraduate compulsory English course that you are teaching. Please focus your response within the context of this particular course throughout the questionnaire.
Please note that this questionnaire is printed on both sides.

Section 1	**Class context**
Objectives	1. To obtain participants' teaching context, with a scope on one undergraduate compulsory English course 2. To gauge, at the surface level, participants' understanding of and ability to control or make decision within their teaching context 3. To gauge, at the surface level, professional support that the participants receive

Section 1: Class context

This section asks for some information on the undergraduate compulsory English course that you are thinking about.

1. What is the name of the course? ________________________________

2. What is the average class size of this course in the current semester? ________________

3. How many sections of this course do you teach in the current semester? ____out of_____

In terms of course objective(s), course syllabus, and/or lesson plan…

4. Do you create your own course objective(s), course syllabus, and/or lesson plan for this course?
   - 0 □ No *(go to Q4a – 4d, then Q5)*
   - 1 □ Yes *(go to Q4e – 4h, then Q5)*

If your answer to Q4 is "No," please answer Q4a – 4d, then Q5

4a. How do you obtain the course objective(s), course syllabus, and/or lesson plan for this course (select all that apply)?
   - 4a-1 □ From course coordinator
   - 4a-2 □ From training session for this course
   - 4a-3 □ From information session for this course
   - 4a-4 □ Other (please specify) ________________________________

4b. Do you receive training or information session on this course and its objective(s), syllabus, and/or lesson plan?
   - 1 □ Training session only
   - 2 □ Information session only
   - 3 □ Both training and information sessions
   - 4 □ None

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4c. How much do you understand the course objective(s), course syllabus, and/or lesson plan that you receive for this course?

3 □ Clearly understand
2 □ Somewhat understand
1 □ Do not understand at all

4d. How comfortable are you in using the course objective(s), course syllabus, and/or lesson plan that you receive for this course?

3 □ Completely comfortable
2 □ Somewhat comfortable
1 □ Not comfortable at all

If your answer to Q4 is "Yes," please answer Q4e – 4h, then Q5

4e. How do you create the course objective(s), course syllabus, and/or lesson plan for this course (select all that apply)?

4e-1 □ Apply knowledge from training, seminar, or conference that I attend on my own
4e-2 □ Apply knowledge from training, seminar, or conference provided by my institution
4e-3 □ Follow directions/instructions from supervisor, department head, or course coordinator
4e-4 □ Use readily available resources, such as commercial textbooks or language standard guidelines
4e-5 □ Other (please specify) ____________________

4f. Do your course objective(s), course syllabus, and/or lesson plan have to be approved by anyone? If so, who?

0 □ No
1 □ Yes by (please specify title only) ____________________

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4g. Do you train other teachers of this course to use the course objective(s), syllabus, and/or lesson plan?

1 □ No, I am the only teacher of this course.
2 □ No, other teacher/staff does the training.
3 □ No, there is no training.
4 □ Yes, I train other teachers of this course.

4h. Are you in charge of monitoring all teachers of this course so that the course objective(s), course syllabus, and/or lesson plan are followed through in the same pace and manner?

1 □ Not applicable. I am the only teacher of this course.
2 □ No, other teacher/staff does the monitoring.
3 □ No, there is no monitoring.
4 □ Yes, I am in charge of monitoring all teachers of this course.

In terms of <u>teaching materials and/or methodology…</u>

5. Do you create or select your own teaching materials and/or methodology for this course?
   - 0 □ No *(go to Q5a – 5d, then Q6)*
   - 1 □ Yes *(go to Q5e – 5h, then Q6)*

If your answer to Q5 is "No," please answer Q5a – 5d, then Q6

5a. How do you obtain the teaching materials and/or methodology for this course (select all that apply)?
   - 5a-1 □ From course coordinator
   - 5a-2 □ From training session for this course
   - 5a-3 □ From information session for this course
   - 5a-4 □ Other (please specify) ____

5b. Do you receive training or information session on how to use the teaching materials and/or methodology for this course?
   - 1 □ Training session only
   - 2 □ Information session only
   - 3 □ Both training and information sessions
   - 4 □ None

5c. How much do you understand how to use the teaching materials and/or methodology that you receive for this course?
   - 3 □ Clearly understand
   - 2 □ Somewhat understand
   - 1 □ Do not understand at all

5d. How comfortable are you in using the teaching materials and/or methodology that you receive for this course?
   - 3 □ Completely comfortable
   - 2 □ Somewhat comfortable
   - 1 □ Not comfortable at all

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If your answer to Q5 is "Yes," please answer Q5e – 5h, then Q6

5e. How do you create or select the teaching materials and/or methodology for this course (select all that apply)?
   - 5e-1 □ Apply knowledge from training, seminar, or conference that I attend on my own
   - 5e-2 □ Apply knowledge from training, seminar, or conference provided by my institution
   - 5e-3 □ Follow directions/instructions from supervisor, department head, or course coordinator
   - 5e-4 □ Use readily available resources, such as commercial textbooks or language standard guidelines
   - 5e-5 □ Other (please specify) ____

5f. Do your teaching materials and/or methodology have to be approved by anyone? If so, who?

0 □ No
1 □ Yes by (please specify title only) ____

5g. Do you train other teachers of this course to use the teaching materials and/or methodology?

1 □ No, I am the only teacher of this course.
2 □ No, other teacher/staff does the training.
3 □ No, there is no training.
4 □ Yes, I train other teachers of this course.

5h. Are you in charge of monitoring all teachers of this course so that the teaching materials and/or methodology are followed through in the same pace and manner?

1 □ Not applicable. I am the only teacher of this course.
2 □ No, other teacher/staff does the monitoring.
3 □ No, there is no monitoring.
4 □ Yes, I am in charge of monitoring all teachers of this course.

In terms of assessment and grading scheme…

6. Do you create your own assessment (quizzes, tests, presentations, etc.) and grading schemes for this course?

0 □ No *(go to Q6a – 6d, then Q7)*
1 □ Yes *(go to Q6e – 6h, then Q7)*

If your answer to Q6 is "No," please answer Q6a – 6d, then Q7

6a. How do you obtain the assessment and grading schemes for this course (select all that apply)?

6a-1 □ From course coordinator
6a-2 □ From training session for this course
6a-3 □ From information session for this course
6a-4 □ Other (please specify) ____

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6b. Do you receive training or information session on the assessment and grading schemes for this course?

1 □ Training session only
2 □ Information session only
3 □ Both training and information sessions
4 □ None

6c. How much do you understand the assessment and grading schemes for this course?

3 □ Clearly understand
2 □ Somewhat understand
1 □ Do not understand at all

6d. How comfortable are you in using the assessment and grading schemes for this course?
- 3 □ Completely comfortable
- 2 □ Somewhat comfortable
- 1 □ Not comfortable at all

If your answer to Q6 is "Yes," please answer Q6e – 6h, then Q7

6e. How do you create the assessment and grading schemes for this course (select all that apply)?
- 6e-1 □ Apply knowledge from training, seminar, or conference that I attend on my own
- 6e-2 □ Apply knowledge from training, seminar, or conference provided by my institution
- 6e-3 □ Follow directions/instructions from supervisor, department head, or course coordinator
- 6e-4 □ Use readily available resources, such as commercial textbooks or language standard guidelines
- 6e-5 □ Other (please specify) ____

6f. Do your assessment and grading schemes have to be approved by anyone? If so, who?
- 0 □ No
- 1 □ Yes by (please specify title only) ______________________________________

6g. Do you train other teachers of this course to use the assessment and grading schemes?
- 1 □ No, I am the only teacher of this course.
- 2 □ No, other teacher/staff does the training.
- 3 □ No, there is no training.
- 4 □ Yes, I train other teachers of this course.

6h. Are you in charge of monitoring all teachers of this course so that the assessment and grading schemes are followed through in the same pace and manner?
- 1 □ Not applicable. I am the only teacher of this course.
- 2 □ No, other teacher/staff does the monitoring.
- 3 □ No, there is no monitoring.
- 4 □ Yes, I am in charge of monitoring all teachers of this course.

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Section 2	**Awareness, understanding, and interpretation of education policies in focus of research**
Objective	To answer research question 1: How do English teachers understand the English language assessment policy imposed on their institution, and what is their interpretation of such policy?
Note	1. Content of items in this section is based on Pantić's (2015) model on *Sense of purpose*. 2. Excerpts of the policy documents in focus of this study were provided to participants to refer to and are presented in Appendix A and Appendix B of this dissertation.

Section 2: Awareness, understanding, and interpretation of education policies in focus of research

Before answering the questions in this section, please read the attached English language assessment policies (to be called "policies" from this point onward). This section then asks whether and how you know of such policies, what your understanding of them is, and how you interpret them. This is not a test of knowledge, so please be assured that there is no right or wrong *answer.*

7. Referring to the attached document, are you aware of these English language assessment policies ("policies") for higher education?
   - 1 □ No, I'm not aware of any of these policies. *(go to Q9 and onward)*
   - 2 □ Yes, both policies. *(go to Q8 and onward)*
   - 3 □ Yes, but only the National Education Plan. *(go to Q8 and onward)*
   - 4 □ Yes, but only the Policy to upgrade English proficiency standards. *(go to Q8 and onward)*

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If your answer to Q7 is "Yes" (any option), please also answer Q8. Otherwise, please go to Q9.

8. How do you know of the policy(ies) (select all that apply)?
   - 8-1 □ Announcement in department/institution meeting
   - 8-2 □ Announcement by supervisor or department head
   - 8-3 □ Conversation with teaching colleagues or department staff
   - 8-4 □ Participation in professional development/training program
   - 8-5 □ Formal letter from department/institution authority
   - 8-6 □ Other (please specify) ____

For Q9 – 13, please refer to the attached policies.

9. What is/are or would be your role(s) in implementing these policies in your institution (select all that apply)?
   - 9-1 □ I am not sure or do not know what my role is or would be.
     (go to Q13 and onward)
   - 9-2 □ I set institutional policies that will meet the objectives of these national policies (policy maker).
     (go to Q10 and onward)
   - 9-3 □ I make sure that both national policies and institutional policies are followed through and achieved (policy administrator).
     (go to Q10 and onward)
   - 9-4 □ I execute both national and institutional policies in the classroom in order to achieve their objectives (policy implementer).
     (go to Q10 and onward)
   - 9-5 □ I have other role(s) (please specify) ________________________.
     (go to Q10 and onward)

10. Is/Are the role(s) in Q9 given to you or of your own choice?
    - 1 □ The role(s) is/are officially given to me.
      (go to Q11 and onward)
    - 2 □ The role(s) is/are not officially given to me, but I know I have to perform it/them.
      (go to Q12 and onward)
    - 3 □ I choose to act in this/these role(s) by my own choice.
      (go to Q12 and onward)

11. Who authorizes this/these role(s) to you (please specify title only)? ___________________

12. How comfortable are you in performing such role(s)?
    - 3 □ Completely comfortable
    - 2 □ Somewhat comfortable
    - 1 □ Not comfortable at all

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For Q13 – 26 please rate your agreement on the below statements by making an “X” in the boxes, where

1 = Strongly disagree
2 = Somewhat disagree
3 = Neither agree nor disagree
4 = Somewhat agree
5 = Strongly agree.

	Strongly disagree				**Strongly agree**
What do you think are the benefit(s) and/or disadvantage(s) of these policies in the teaching context of your compulsory English course?	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**
13. These policies enhance English language teaching, learning, and assessment of my compulsory English course.					
14. These policies put a constraint in English language teaching, learning, and assessment of my compulsory English course.					
15. These policies encourage me as an English language teacher to take more action and/or make my own decisions on the teaching, learning, and assessment of my compulsory English course.					
16. These policies enable and/or empower me as an English language teacher to make a difference (e.g., being more innovative or experimenting) in teaching, learning, and assessment of my compulsory English course.					
17. Under these policies, I as an English language teacher would still be a mere follower of prescribed pedagogy.					
18. My role as an English language teacher, including the actions I take and the decisions I make in my compulsory English classroom, would be restricted or restrained in some way by the policies.					
What is your overall perception and/or opinion of these two policies?	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**
19. The objectives of these policies are reasonable.					
20. The objectives of these policies are achievable.					
21. It is possible to put the statements/requirements in these policies into real use.					
22. It is practical to put the statements/requirements in these policies into real use.					
23. My role(s) as stated in Q9 (or lack thereof) allow me to implement these policies in order to achieve their objectives.					
24. My institutional culture/environment allows me to implement these policies in order to achieve their objectives.					
25. My compulsory English classroom context allows me to implement these policies in order to achieve their objectives.					
26. I agree with the statements and requirements in these policies.					

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Section 3	**Individual attributes in relation to education policies in focus of research**
Objectives	1. To answer research question 2: How do English teachers achieve agency in the classroom context, in light of the English language assessment policy? 2. To answer research question 3: How is agency of English teachers influenced by the English language assessment policy?
Note	Content of items in this section is based on Pantić's (2015) model on *Competence*, *Autonomy*, and *Reflexivity*.

Section 3: Individual attributes in relation to education policies in focus of research

This section asks what you think the policies have (or have not) done to you as an English language teacher. Once again, this is not a test of knowledge, so please be assured that there is no right or wrong answer.

For Q27 – 45, please rate your agreement on the below statements by making an "X" in the boxes, where

1 = Strongly disagree
2 = Somewhat disagree
3 = Neither agree nor disagree
4 = Somewhat agree
5 = Strongly agree.

In overall…	**1** (Strongly disagree)	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5** (Strongly agree)
27. The policies provide me with clear objectives of English language teaching, learning, and assessment in higher education.					
28. The policies provide me with clear guidelines of what I need to do to achieve the policies' objectives.					
29. The policies enable and/or empower me to work toward achieving the policies' objectives.					
30. The policies strengthen my beliefs in English language teaching, learning, and assessment.					
31. The policies strengthen my identity as an English language teacher.					
32. The policies strengthen my motivation in working as an English language teacher.					
33. The policies strengthen my confidence in being an English language teacher.					

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In overall…	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**
34. The policies strengthen my sense of control over the environment of my compulsory English classroom.					
35. The policies strengthen my sense of control over the work environment outside my compulsory English classroom (e.g., in my department or faculty).					
Comparing the situation before and after the policies became effective (B.E. 2559 / 2016 C.E.)…	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**
36. I am more aware of and better understand the objectives of English language teaching, learning, and assessment in higher education.					
37. I work more efficiently and effectively, with guidelines from the policies, toward achieving the policies' objectives.					
38. I am more able and/or more empowered to act in my role(s), or in my abilities, to work toward achieving the policies' objectives.					
39. The policies have *not* affected my beliefs in English language teaching, learning, and assessment.					
40. The policies have *not* affected my identity as an English language teacher.					
41. The policies have *not* affected my motivation in working as an English language teacher.					
42. The policies have *not* affected my confidence in being an English language teacher.					
43. The policies have *not* affected my sense of control when I work *inside* my compulsory English classroom.					
44. The policies have *not* affected my sense of control when I work within my institution *other than* my compulsory English classroom (e.g., in my department or faculty).					
45. I can still freely put my beliefs in English language teaching, learning, and assessment into use in my compulsory English classroom.					

Section 4	**Background information**
Objective	To obtain participants' background information that could play a part in formation and/or achievement of teacher agency

Section 4: Background information

Finally, in order to help the researcher understand and analyze your responses better, please provide her with some background information.

46. Sex   1 □ Male   2 □ Female

47. Age
    1 □ 20 – 23   2 □ 24 – 26   3 □ 27 – 29
    4 □ 30 – 33   5 □ 34 – 36   6 □ 37 – 39
    7 □ 40 – 43   8 □ 44 – 46   9 □ 47 – 49
    10 □ 50 – 53   11 □ 54 – 56   12 □ 57 – 59
    13 □ 60 or over

48. Home country ______________________________

49. Area(s) of academic expertise (select all that apply)
    49-1 □ English language or language-related area
    49-2 □ English language instruction or language instruction-related area
    49-3 □ English language assessment or language assessment-related area
    49-4 □ Other (please specify) ______________________________

50. Highest education level
    1 □ Doctoral degree
    2 □ Master's degree
    3 □ Bachelor's degree
    4 □ Other (please specify) ______________________________

51. Do you have any study abroad (i.e., outside your home country) experience?
    0 □ No
    1 □ Yes   Please list three (3) most recent countries.

	Which country?	For how long? (in months or years)	Program of study (e.g., major, concentration, certificate)
1			
2			
3			

52. Total English-language teaching experience ____________ years

53. Total English-language teaching experience *in Thailand* ____________ years

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54. Did you teach or are you teaching subject(s) other than English language?

0 □ No

1 □ Yes   Please list subjects taught during the past three (3) years.

	What subject?	For how long? (in months or years)
1		
2		
3		

55. Did you work in any non-education field(s) before coming into teaching?

0 □ No

1 □ Yes   Please list three (3) most recent fields before coming into teaching.

	What field/industry?	For how long? (in months or years)
1		
2		
3		

What was your last field and position before coming into education?

Field/Industry ______________________ Position _______________________

56. What type of institution do you currently work at?

1 □ Public (government) college or university

2 □ Private college or university

3 □ Other (please specify) ____

57. What is/are your current role(s) or position(s) in your institution (select all that apply)?

57-1 □ Administrative or management position (e.g., head of department)

57-2 □ Policy maker

57-3 □ Policy administrator

57-4 □ Policy implementer

57-5 □ Teacher / Lecturer

57-6 □ Other (please specify) ___________________________________

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Section 5	Request for further participation, response clarification, and receipt of summary of results
Objectives	1. To solicit participation in an interview—either in focus group or one-to-one format—for more in-depth discussion 2. To ask for permission for the researcher to contact for clarification of the responses 3. To ask whether the participants would like to receive a summary of the research findings

Section 5: Request for further participation, response clarification, and receipt of summary of results

The researcher would be grateful if you would allow her to contact you after the completion of this questionnaire. Kindly indicate your preference by making an "X" in front of the options below.

1) Participation in follow-up interview

☐ I am willing to participate in a group interview.

☐ I am willing to participate in an individual interview.

☐ I do not wish to participate in an interview.

2) Further clarification of your responses

☐ I can be contacted for clarification of my questionnaire responses.

☐ I can be contacted for clarification of my interview responses.

☐ I do not wish to be further contacted.

3) Receipt of summary of the research findings

☐ I would like to receive a summary of the research findings.

☐ I do not wish to receive a summary of the research findings.

If you have indicated your willingness to be further inquired and/or receive a summary of research findings, please provide your name and contact information below.

Your information will be known to the researcher only and will remain confidential throughout the research process and its publication.

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Name ______________________________________

E-mail ______________________________________

Mobile phone ______________________________________

This is the end of the questionnaire.

Thank you once again for your time and your contribution to this research.

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Appendix D

Interview guide

Interview topics for focus group interview and one-to-one interview
for a Ph.D. dissertation titled
English language assessment policy and agency of English teachers in Thailand

Introduction[17]	
Objectives	1. To provide participants with a brief information on the interview 2. To reassure participants of their anonymity and withdrawal options (a separate research information sheet and consent form were provided prior to the interview)

Introduction

Thank you for sparing your time for an interview today. This interview is part of a research titled *English language assessment policy and agency of English teachers in Thailand*, which is a Ph.D. dissertation under the English as an International Language Program at Chulalongkorn University.

As participant(s) of this interview, you will remain anonymous throughout the research process and publication of the research results.

In the event that you would kindly allow the researcher to contact you for clarification of your responses after this interview, your name and contact information will be known only to the researcher and will be kept strictly confidential.

Should you wish, you may withdraw yourself or any of your information from this research at any time without the need to give reasons and without consequences of any sort.

Thank you once again for your time and your contribution to this research.

[17] All texts and tables in blue are for reader's reference only and were not present in actual instrument.

Part 1	**Current teaching context and practice in relation to the policies**
Objectives	1. To answer research question 2: How do English teachers achieve agency in the classroom context, in light of the English language assessment policy? 2. To answer research question 3: How is agency of English teachers influenced by the English language assessment policy?
Note	1. Items in this section is based on Pantić's (2015) model on *Competence*, *Autonomy*, and *Reflexivity*. 2. Content of this section is partially covered in the questionnaire survey and are further probed in the interview. 3. All interview participants completed the questionnaire survey prior to the interview session.

<u>Part 1: Current teaching context and practice in relation to the policies</u>

For this interview session, although the questions will mainly ask about your teaching experience in the undergraduate compulsory English course that you mentioned in your questionnaire, please feel free to add stories about your teaching experience from other English courses that you may be teaching.

Before we start, I'd like to ask you to review the two English language assessment policies once again. Some questions will ask about your teaching experience in relation to these policies.

If you are ready, I'd like to start the interview.

1. As a warm-up question, could you tell me a bit about the undergraduate compulsory English course that you mentioned in your questionnaire? What is it about? How do you feel teaching it (positive, negative, neutral)? Why?

2. Disregarding any kind of rules and restrictions, in your view, based on your beliefs, attitudes, and values in English language teaching:
   2a. How should this course be taught?
   2b. What do you hope to see or achieve when students finish this course?
   2c. What would you do to make that happen?

3. How would you describe your motivation in teaching this course?

4. Now, based on the two policies that you just read, do you see or feel that some of the things required in this course—whether inside the classroom or outside the

classroom (e.g., requiring students to use self-learning center)—could be the results of these policies?

That is, what do you see currently being done (e.g., you're required to do it) that you think is based on, or is the result of, these policies?

5. Do you feel that such requirements will help meet the policy objectives?
   5a. If so, how?
   5b. If not, what do you believe should be done in order to meet them?

6. Now, please think about your current practice in this course—what you are actually doing:
   6a. Is it the same as what you hope to see, achieve, or do? Or is it more toward what you are required to do by the policies?
   6b. How do you manage to balance yourself between "what you hope to see, achieve, or do" and "what you are required to do"?

7. What do you see as the positive and negative effects of these two policies on the teaching, learning, and assessment of this course? Let's discuss separately:
   7a. First, the positive and negative effects on you regarding the teaching and assessment.
   7b. Second, the positive and negative effects on the students regarding their learning.

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Part 2	**Nature of workplace and relationship with co-workers and students**
Objectives	1. To answer research question 2: How do English teachers achieve agency in the classroom context, in light of the English language assessment policy? 2. To answer research question 3: How is agency of English teachers influenced by the English language assessment policy?
Note	1. Items in this section is based on Pantić's (2015) model on *Reflexivity*. 2. Hand-outs with pre-printed word list for questions 11 and 12 were provided to the participants to mark on, with one form per type of individuals in question.

<u>Part 2: Nature of workplace and relationship with co-workers and students</u>

In the next part of the interview, I'd like to ask some questions about your workplace and your relationship with people in it.

8. How would you describe your workplace? For example (does not have to be this exact list):
   - 8a. How do people in different functions/departments interact?
   - 8b. How do people of different authoritative levels interact?
   - 8c. How do colleagues (of the same or similar level) interact?
   - 8d. What are the people's attitudes toward one another when they interact or work together?

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9. Do you think your workplace is affected by the two policies? How?

10. How much do you feel you fit in with this workplace? Do you feel you belong?

Now, I'd like to ask about your relationship with people you work with in daily life.

11. Which of the following words describe your relationship with your co-workers?

    In the word list given to you, please circle the words that apply to your situation. There are four pages, one for each type of relationship as marked at the top of the list (see the types of relationship below). Feel free to add your own words or additional comments to the list.

Types of relationship:
   a. Relationship with other teachers in general (peers, colleagues)
   b. Relationship with direct supervisor
   c. Relationship with administrative (management) staff
   d. Relationship with your students in this course

12. Do the two policies influence your relationship with the people in the four categories above? Looking at the circles you have made (on every page), which ones are affected? How?

Word list for questions 11 and 12

Column A	Column B	Column C
Authority-led	Casual	Close-knit
Cliquish (take sides or favorites)	Formal	Collaborative
Discouraging	Indifferent	Cooperative
Distant	Neutral	Empowering
Distrustful	Nonchalant	Encouraging
Hierarchical	Non-opinionated	Friendly
Judgmental	Protective	Honest
Oppressive	Unchallenged	Mentoring
Problematic	Uninterested	Motivating
Unfriendly	Unquestioning	Non-judgmental
Unresponsive		Respectful
Unsociable		Trusting
Your words below…	**Your words below…**	**Your words below…**

This is the end of the interview.

Thank you for your time and your contribution to this research.

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Appendix E

Questionnaire survey with results

Section 1: Class context

1. What is the name of the course? [Course name varies]

2. What is the average class size of this course in the current semester?
   Min 10; Max 96; Mean 37; Mode 40

3. How many sections of this course do you teach in the current semester?
   Teach Min 1; Max 30; Mean 3; Mode 1 out of Min 1; Max 119; Mean 12; Mode 1

In terms of course objective(s), course syllabus, and/or lesson plan…

4. Do you create your own course objective(s), course syllabus, and/or lesson plan for this course? (n = 63)
   - 0 □ 35 (56%) No *(go to Q4a – 4d, then Q5)*
   - 1 □ 28 (44%) Yes *(go to Q4e – 4h, then Q5)*

If your answer to Q4 is "No," please answer Q4a – 4d, then Q5

4a. How do you obtain the course objective(s), course syllabus, and/or lesson plan for this course (select all that apply)? (n = 35)
   - 4a-1 □ 31 (89%) From course coordinator
   - 4a-2 □ 1 (3%) From training session for this course
   - 4a-3 □ 3 (9%) From information session for this course
   - 4a-4 □ 2 (6%) Other (please specify)

   (1) Use knowledge from Ajarn who taught me this course
   (1) Use what is provided from English Department Head

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4b. Do you receive training or information session on this course and its objective(s), syllabus, and/or lesson plan? (n = 35)
   - 1 □ 0 (0%) Training session only
   - 2 □ 27 (77%) Information session only
   - 3 □ 4 (11%) Both training and information sessions
   - 4 □ 4 (11%) None

4c. How much do you understand the course objective(s), course syllabus, and/or lesson plan that you receive for this course? (n = 35)
   - 3 □ 31 (89%) Clearly understand
   - 2 □ 4 (11%) Somewhat understand
   - 1 □ 0 (0%) Do not understand at all

4d. How comfortable are you in using the course objective(s), course syllabus, and/or lesson plan that you receive for this course? (n = 35)

3 □ 18 (51%) Completely comfortable
2 □ 16 (46%) Somewhat comfortable
1 □ 1 (3%) Not comfortable at all

If your answer to Q4 is "Yes," please answer Q4e – 4h, then Q5

4e. How do you create the course objective(s), course syllabus, and/or lesson plan for this course (select all that apply)? (n = 28)

4e-1 □ 13 (46%) Apply knowledge from training, seminar, or conference that I attend on my own
4e-2 □ 7 (25%) Apply knowledge from training, seminar, or conference provided by my institution
4e-3 □ 8 (29%) Follow directions/instructions from supervisor, department head, or course coordinator
4e-4 □ 17 (61%) Use readily available resources, such as commercial textbooks or language standard guidelines
4e-5 □ 12 (43%) Other (please specify)

(5) Use external resources (e.g., handbook, commercial textbooks, online quizzes)
(3) Use past experience in teaching similar courses or trial and error
(2) Use experience and data from own research
(2) Use course description, syllabus, objectives as guideline to create own version
(1) Use experience from overseas school visit
(1) Use own education background
(1) Discuss with faculty staff or colleagues
(1) Use personal objectives for students

4f. Do your course objective(s), course syllabus, and/or lesson plan have to be approved by anyone? If so, who? (n = 28)

0 □ 14 (50%) No
1 □ 14 (50%) Yes by (please specify title only)

(6) Dean, Department Head, Program Head, Vice President in Academic Affairs
(3) Committee of faculty and co-teachers
(2) Not sure
(1) College consultant
(1) Course coordinator
(1) Quality Assurance committee

4g. Do you train other teachers of this course to use the course objective(s), syllabus, and/or lesson plan? (n = 28)

1 □ 7 (25%) No, I am the only teacher of this course.
2 □ 2 (7%) No, other teacher/staff does the training.
3 □ 12 (43%) No, there is no training.
4 □ 7 (25%) Yes, I train other teachers of this course.

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4h. Are you in charge of monitoring all teachers of this course so that the course objective(s), course syllabus, and/or lesson plan are followed through in the same pace and manner? (n = 28)

1 □ 8 (29%) Not applicable. I am the only teacher of this course.
2 □ 2 (7%) No, other teacher/staff does the monitoring.
3 □ 7 (25%) No, there is no monitoring.
4 □ 11 (39%) Yes, I am in charge of monitoring all teachers of this course.

In terms of <u>teaching materials and/or methodology…</u>

5. Do you create or select your own teaching materials and/or methodology for this course? (n = 63)

0 □ 22 (35%) No *(go to Q5a – 5d, then Q6)*
1 □ 41 (65%) Yes *(go to Q5e – 5h, then Q6)*

If your answer to Q5 is "No," please answer Q5a – 5d, then Q6

5a. How do you obtain the teaching materials and/or methodology for this course (select all that apply)? (n = 22)

5a-1 □ 17 (77%) From course coordinator
5a-2 □ 1 (5%) From training session for this course
5a-3 □ 4 (18%) From information session for this course
5a-4 □ 5 (23%) Other (please specify)

(2) Use information from agent/publisher of the commercial textbook
(1) Use online resources
(1) Use provided course book
(1) Use what is provided from English Department Head

5b. Do you receive training or information session on how to use the teaching materials and/or methodology for this course? (n = 22)

1 □ 0 (0%) Training session only
2 □ 13 (59%) Information session only
3 □ 3 (14%) Both training and information sessions
4 □ 6 (27%) None

5c. How much do you understand how to use the teaching materials and/or methodology that you receive for this course? (n = 22)

3 □ 16 (73%) Clearly understand
2 □ 5 (23%) Somewhat understand
1 □ 1 (5%) Do not understand at all

5d. How comfortable are you in using the teaching materials and/or methodology that you receive for this course? (n = 22)

3 □ 12 (55%) Completely comfortable
2 □ 8 (36%) Somewhat comfortable
1 □ 2 (9%) Not comfortable at all

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If your answer to Q5 is "Yes," please answer Q5e – 5h, then Q6

5e. How do you create or select the teaching materials and/or methodology for this course (select all that apply)? (n = 41)

- 5e-1 □ 22 (54%) Apply knowledge from training, seminar, or conference that I attend on my own
- 5e-2 □ 11 (27%) Apply knowledge from training, seminar, or conference provided by my institution
- 5e-3 □ 11 (27%) Follow directions/instructions from supervisor, department head, or course coordinator
- 5e-4 □ 28 (68%) Use readily available resources, such as commercial textbooks or language standard guidelines
- 5e-5 □ 17 (41%) Other (please specify)

(8) Use external resources (e.g., online resources, pre-compiled materials)
(5) Use personal resources (e.g., creativity, personal experience)
(4) Use experience and data from own research
(3) Use information of students' levels and needs
(1) Use experience from overseas school visit
(1) Use course description to create own version
(1) Discuss with faculty staff or colleagues

5f. Do your teaching materials and/or methodology have to be approved by anyone? If so, who? (n = 41)

- 0 □ 31 (76%) No
- 1 □ 10 (24%) Yes by (please specify title only)

(4) Vice Dean, Department Head, Program Head
(2) Committee of faculty and co-teachers
(1) Course coordinator
(1) Internal expert
(1) External expert
(1) University Academic Department
(1) Quality Assurance committee

5g. Do you train other teachers of this course to use the teaching materials and/or methodology? (n = 41)

- 1 □ 10 (24%) No, I am the only teacher of this course.
- 2 □ 1 (2%) No, other teacher/staff does the training.
- 3 □ 22 (54%) No, there is no training.
- 4 □ 8 (20%) Yes, I train other teachers of this course.

5h. Are you in charge of monitoring all teachers of this course so that the teaching materials and/or methodology are followed through in the same pace and manner? (n = 41)

- 1 □ 11 (27%) Not applicable. I am the only teacher of this course.
- 2 □ 9 (22%) No, other teacher/staff does the monitoring.
- 3 □ 11 (27%) No, there is no monitoring.
- 4 □ 10 (24%) Yes, I am in charge of monitoring all teachers of this course.

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In terms of <u>assessment and grading scheme…</u>

6. Do you create your own assessment (quizzes, tests, presentations, etc.) and grading schemes for this course? (n = 63)
   - 0 □ 26 (41%) No *(go to Q6a – 6d, then Q7)*
   - 1 □ 37 (59%) Yes *(go to Q6e – 6h, then Q7)*

If your answer to Q6 is "No," please answer Q6a – 6d, then Q7

6a. How do you obtain the assessment and grading schemes for this course (select all that apply)? (n = 26)
   - 6a-1 □ 23 (88%) From course coordinator
   - 6a-2 □ 0 (0%) From training session for this course
   - 6a-3 □ 6 (23%) From information session for this course
   - 6a-4 □ 4 (15%) Other (please specify)

   (2) Discuss with faculty staff or colleagues
   (1) Use provided course book
   (1) Use provided syllabus

6b. Do you receive training or information session on the assessment and grading schemes for this course? (n = 26)
   - 1 □ 1 (4%) Training session only
   - 2 □ 18 (69%) Information session only
   - 3 □ 3 (12%) Both training and information sessions
   - 4 □ 4 (15%) None

6c. How much do you understand the assessment and grading schemes for this course? (n = 26)
   - 3 □ 19 (73%) Clearly understand
   - 2 □ 6 (23%) Somewhat understand
   - 1 □ 1 (4%) Do not understand at all

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6d. How comfortable are you in using the assessment and grading schemes for this course? (n = 26)
   - 3 □ 15 (58%) Completely comfortable
   - 2 □ 10 (38%) Somewhat comfortable
   - 1 □ 1 (4%) Not comfortable at all

If your answer to Q6 is "Yes," please answer Q6e – 6h, then Q7

6e. How do you create the assessment and grading schemes for this course (select all that apply)? (n = 37)

- 6e-1 □ 19 (51%) Apply knowledge from training, seminar, or conference that I attend on my own
- 6e-2 □ 9 (24%) Apply knowledge from training, seminar, or conference provided by my institution
- 6e-3 □ 7 (19%) Follow directions/instructions from supervisor, department head, or course coordinator
- 6e-4 □ 20 (54%) Use readily available resources, such as commercial textbooks or language standard guidelines
- 6e-5 □ 12 (32%) Other (please specify)

(4) Use course description and objectives as guideline to create own version
(3) Use experience and data from own research
(3) Use personal objectives for students
(3) Use past experience in teaching
(2) Discuss with faculty staff or colleagues
(1) Use experience from overseas school visit

6f. Do your assessment and grading schemes have to be approved by anyone? If so, who? (n = 37)

- 0 □ 24 (65%) No
- 1 □ 13 (35%) Yes by (please specify title only)

(4) Associate Dean, Program Head
(4) Course coordinator
(2) Committee of faculty
(1) Internal expert
(1) External expert
(1) Quality Assurance committee
(1) Major instructor
(1) Exam committee

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6g. Do you train other teachers of this course to use the assessment and grading schemes? (n = 37)

- 1 □ 10 (27%) No, I am the only teacher of this course.
- 2 □ 3 (8%) No, other teacher/staff does the training.
- 3 □ 17 (46%) No, there is no training.
- 4 □ 7 (19%) Yes, I train other teachers of this course.

6h. Are you in charge of monitoring all teachers of this course so that the assessment and grading schemes are followed through in the same pace and manner? (n = 37)

- 1 □ 11 (30%) Not applicable. I am the only teacher of this course.
- 2 □ 5 (14%) No, other teacher/staff does the monitoring.
- 3 □ 11 (30%) No, there is no monitoring.
- 4 □ 10 (27%) Yes, I am in charge of monitoring all teachers of this course.

<u>Section 2: Awareness, understanding, and interpretation of education policies in focus of research</u>

7. Referring to the attached document, are you aware of these English language assessment policies ("policies") for higher education? (n = 63)

    1 □ 20 (32%) No, I'm not aware of any of these policies. *(go to Q9 and onward)*
    2 □ 28 (44%) Yes, both policies. *(go to Q8 and onward)*
    3 □ 5 (8%) Yes, but only the National Education Plan. *(go to Q8 and onward)*
    4 □ 10 (16%) Yes, but only the Policy to upgrade English proficiency standards. *(go to Q8 and onward)*

If your answer to Q7 is "Yes" (any option), please also answer Q8. Otherwise, please go to Q9.

8. How do you know of the policy(ies) (select all that apply)? (n = 43)

    8-1 □ 24 (56%) Announcement in department/institution meeting
    8-2 □ 7 (16%) Announcement by supervisor or department head
    8-3 □ 12 (28%) Conversation with teaching colleagues or department staff
    8-4 □ 10 (23%) Participation in professional development/training program
    8-5 □ 4 (9%) Formal letter from department/institution authority
    8-6 □ 11 (26%) Other (please specify)

    (3) Reading from general media (e.g., newspaper, the Internet)
    (3) Conducting professional or educational (e.g., for a master's degree) research
    (1) Announcement by supervisor in previous institution
    (1) Holding administrative position in previous institution
    (1) Doing project involving developing CEFR-based assessment and learning materials
    (1) Doing translation work on policy-related document

For Q9 – 12, please refer to the attached policies.

9. What is/are or would be your role(s) in implementing these policies in your institution (select all that apply)? (n = 63)

    9-1 □ 22 (35%) I am not sure or do not know what my role is or would be.
    (go to Q13 and onward)
    9-2 □ 5 (8%) I set institutional policies that will meet the objectives of these national policies (policy maker).
    (go to Q10 and onward)
    9-3 □ 7 (11%) I make sure that both national policies and institutional policies are followed through and achieved (policy administrator).
    (go to Q10 and onward)
    9-4 □ 27 (43%) I execute both national and institutional policies in the classroom in order to achieve their objectives (policy implementer).
    (go to Q10 and onward)
    9-5 □ 9 (14%) I have other role(s) (please specify)
    (go to Q10 and onward)

10. Is/Are the role(s) in Q9 given to you or of your own choice? (n = 41)
    1 □ 11 (27%) The role(s) is/are officially given to me.
    (go to Q11 and onward)
    2 □ 20 (49%) The role(s) is/are not officially given to me, but I know I have to perform it/them.
    (go to Q12 and onward)
    3 □ 10 (24%) I choose to act in this/these role(s) by my own choice.
    (go to Q12 and onward)

11. Who authorizes this/these role(s) to you (please specify title only)? (n = 11)
    (8) Dean, Vice Dean, Chairperson, Director, Department Head, Program Head, Faculty Head, Vice President in Academic Affairs
    (2) Academic Affairs, the department
    (1) Do not know the title

12. How comfortable are you in performing such role(s)? (n = 41)
    3 □ 20 (49%) Completely comfortable
    2 □ 21 (51%) Somewhat comfortable
    1 □ 0 (0%) Not comfortable at all

For Q13 – 26 please rate your agreement on the below statements by making an "X" in the boxes, where
1 = Strongly disagree
2 = Somewhat disagree
3 = Neither agree nor disagree
4 = Somewhat agree
5 = Strongly agree.

What do you think are the benefit(s) and/or disadvantage(s) of these policies in the teaching context of your compulsory English course? (n = 63)	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**	**Mean**	**Top 2 boxes (4+5)**
13. These policies enhance English language teaching, learning, and assessment of my compulsory English course.	5 (8%)	4 (6%)	16 (25%)	27 (43%)	11 (17%)	3.56	38 (60%)
14. These policies put a constraint in English language teaching, learning, and assessment of my compulsory English course.	10 (16%)	15 (24%)	15 (24%)	17 (27%)	6 (10%)	2.90	23 (37%)
15. These policies encourage me as an English language teacher to take more action and/or make my own decisions on the teaching, learning, and assessment of my compulsory English course.	5 (8%)	9 (14%)	14 (22%)	21 (33%)	14 (22%)	3.48	35 (56%)

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What do you think are the benefit(s) and/or disadvantage(s) of these policies in the teaching context of your compulsory English course? (n = 63)	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**	**Mean**	**Top 2 boxes (4+5)**
16. These policies enable and/or empower me as an English language teacher to make a difference (e.g., being more innovative or experimenting) in teaching, learning, and assessment of my compulsory English course.	9 (14%)	9 (14%)	19 (30%)	14 (22%)	12 (19%)	3.17	26 (41%)
17. Under these policies, I as an English language teacher would still be a mere follower of prescribed pedagogy.	9 (14%)	7 (11%)	23 (37%)	18 (29%)	6 (10%)	3.08	24 (38%)
18. My role as an English language teacher, including the actions I take and the decisions I make in my compulsory English classroom, would be restricted or restrained in some way by the policies.	10 (16%)	16 (25%)	18 (29%)	10 (16%)	9 (14%)	2.87	19 (30%)
What is your overall perception and/or opinion of these two policies? (n = 63)							
19. The objectives of these policies are reasonable.	3 (5%)	9 (14%)	16 (25%)	24 (38%)	11 (17%)	3.49	35 (56%)
20. The objectives of these policies are achievable.	4 (6%)	19 (30%)	19 (30%)	15 (24%)	6 (10%)	3.00	21 (33%)
21. It is possible to put the statements/requirements in these policies into real use.	0 (0%)	11 (17%)	17 (27%)	27 (43%)	8 (13%)	3.51	35 (56%)
22. It is practical to put the statements/requirements in these policies into real use.	1 (2%)	16 (25%)	20 (32%)	20 (32%)	6 (10%)	3.22	26 (41%)
23. My role(s) as stated in Q9 (or lack thereof) allow me to implement these policies in order to achieve their objectives.	4 (6%)	3 (5%)	30 (48%)	17 (27%)	9 (14%)	3.38	26 (41%)
24. My institutional culture/environment allows me to implement these policies in order to achieve their objectives.	5 (8%)	7 (11%)	18 (29%)	19 (30%)	14 (22%)	3.48	33 (52%)
25. My compulsory English classroom context allows me to implement these policies in order to achieve their objectives.	4 (6%)	8 (13%)	20 (32%)	19 (30%)	12 (19%)	3.43	31 (49%)
26. I agree with the statements and requirements in these policies.	2 (3%)	7 (11%)	22 (35%)	22 (35%)	10 (16%)	3.49	32 (51%)

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Section 3: Individual attributes in relation to education policies in focus of research

For Q27 – 45, please rate your agreement on the below statements by making an "X" in the boxes, where

1 = Strongly disagree
2 = Somewhat disagree
3 = Neither agree nor disagree
4 = Somewhat agree
5 = Strongly agree.

In overall… (n = 63)	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**	**Mean**	**Top 2 boxes (4+5)**
27. The policies provide me with clear objectives of English language teaching, learning, and assessment in higher education.	1 (2%)	10 (16%)	23 (37%)	22 (35%)	7 (11%)	3.38	29 (46%)
28. The policies provide me with clear guidelines of what I need to do to achieve the policies' objectives.	8 (13%)	19 (30%)	16 (25%)	16 (25%)	4 (6%)	2.83	20 (32%)
29. The policies enable and/or empower me to work toward achieving the policies' objectives.	4 (6%)	14 (22%)	24 (38%)	16 (25%)	5 (8%)	3.06	21 (33%)
30. The policies strengthen my beliefs in English language teaching, learning, and assessment.	7 (11%)	16 (25%)	16 (25%)	18 (29%)	6 (10%)	3.00	24 (38%)
31. The policies strengthen my identity as an English language teacher.	8 (13%)	16 (25%)	19 (30%)	12 (19%)	8 (13%)	2.94	20 (32%)
32. The policies strengthen my motivation in working as an English language teacher.	6 (10%)	18 (29%)	17 (27%)	14 (22%)	8 (13%)	3.00	22 (35%)
33. The policies strengthen my confidence in being an English language teacher.	8 (13%)	16 (25%)	21 (33%)	11 (17%)	7 (11%)	2.89	18 (29%)
34. The policies strengthen my sense of control over the environment of my compulsory English classroom.	9 (14%)	18 (29%)	18 (29%)	12 (19%)	6 (10%)	2.81	18 (29%)
35. The policies strengthen my sense of control over the work environment outside my compulsory English classroom (e.g., in my department or faculty).	8 (13%)	21 (33%)	21 (33%)	6 (10%)	7 (11%)	2.73	13 (21%)

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Comparing the situation before and after the policies became effective (B.E. 2559 / 2016 C.E.)… (n = 63)	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**	**Mean**	**Top 2 boxes (4+5)**
36. I am more aware of and better understand the objectives of English language teaching, learning, and assessment in higher education.	4 (6%)	10 (16%)	19 (30%)	23 (37%)	7 (11%)	3.30	30 (48%)
37. I work more efficiently and effectively, with guidelines from the policies, toward achieving the policies' objectives.	9 (14%)	14 (22%)	23 (37%)	13 (21%)	4 (6%)	2.83	17 (27%)
38. I am more able and/or more empowered to act in my role(s), or in my abilities, to work toward achieving the policies' objectives.	8 (13%)	15 (24%)	21 (33%)	13 (21%)	6 (10%)	2.90	19 (30%)
39. The policies have *not* affected my beliefs in English language teaching, learning, and assessment.	4 (6%)	11 (17%)	9 (14%)	17 (27%)	22 (35%)	3.67	39 (62%)
40. The policies have *not* affected my identity as an English language teacher.	2 (3%)	9 (14%)	12 (19%)	21 (33%)	19 (30%)	3.73	40 (63%)
41. The policies have *not* affected my motivation in working as an English language teacher.	5 (8%)	9 (14%)	10 (16%)	15 (24%)	24 (38%)	3.70	39 (62%)
42. The policies have *not* affected my confidence in being an English language teacher.	2 (3%)	10 (16%)	4 (6%)	21 (33%)	26 (41%)	3.94	47 (75%)
43. The policies have *not* affected my sense of control when I work *inside* my compulsory English classroom.	2 (3%)	6 (10%)	12 (19%)	17 (27%)	26 (41%)	3.94	43 (68%)
44. The policies have *not* affected my sense of control when I work within my institution *other than* my compulsory English classroom (e.g., in my department or faculty).	2 (3%)	8 (13%)	18 (29%)	17 (27%)	18 (29%)	3.65	35 (56%)
45. I can still freely put my beliefs in English language teaching, learning, and assessment into use in my compulsory English classroom.	0 (0%)	4 (6%)	8 (13%)	23 (37%)	28 (44%)	4.19	51 (81%)

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<u>Section 4: Background information</u> (n = 63)

46. Sex 1 □ 36 (57%) Male 2 □ 27 (43%) Female

47. Age
1 □ 1 (2%) 20 – 23
2 □ 0 (0%) 24 – 26
3 □ 1 (2%) 27 – 29
4 □ 8 (13%) 30 – 33
5 □ 6 (10%) 34 – 36
6 □ 6 (10%) 37 – 39
7 □ 14 (22%) 40 – 43
8 □ 6 (10%) 44 – 46
9 □ 7 (11%) 47 – 49
10 □ 7 (11%) 50 – 53
11 □ 1 (2%) 54 – 56
12 □ 4 (6%) 57 – 59
13 □ 2 (3%) 60 or over

Min 20 – 23; Max 60 or over; Mode 40 – 43

48. Home country

Inner Circle 20 (32%)	Outer Circle 21 (33%)	Expanding Circle 22 (35%)
(9) The United Kingdom (8) The United States (1) Australia (1) Canada (1) Ireland	(19) The Philippines (1) India (1) Sri Lanka	(22) Thailand

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49. Area(s) of academic expertise (select all that apply)
49-1 □ 28 (44%) English language or language-related area
49-2 □ 46 (73%) English language instruction or language instruction-related area
49-3 □ 12 (19%) English language assessment or language assessment-related area
49-4 □ 9 (14%) Other (please specify)

(2) Nursing
(1) Anthropology and Archeology
(1) Business Communication
(1) Business English
(1) General linguistics
(1) Literature
(1) Media / Mass Communication
(1) Political Science
(1) Secondary Art Education
(1) Technical Writing

50. Highest education level

1 □ 17 (27%) Doctoral degree
2 □ 35 (56%) Master's degree
3 □ 11 (17%) Bachelor's degree
4 □ 0 (0%) Other (please specify)

51. Do you have any study abroad (i.e., outside your home country) experience?

0 □ 35 (56%) No
1 □ 28 (44%) Yes

Please list three (3) most recent countries.

[Note: Some "Yes" participants did not provide information in all columns.]

Which country?	For how long? (in months or years)	Program of study (e.g., major, concentration, certificate)
(12) Thailand (5) The United Kingdom (4) Australia (3) The United States (2) Malaysia (1) Canada (1) Germany (1) India (1) Japan (1) Singapore (1) South Africa (1) South Korea (1) Spain (1) Sweden (1) Zambia	Min 0.08 years Max 10 years Mean 2.33 years	[See table below]

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Program of study

Degree type	English-/ Education-related field	Non-English-/ Non-education-related field	Unspecified field	Total
Doctoral degree	3		1	4
Master's degree	9	1	2	12
Bachelor's degree		2	2	4
Certificate/Diploma	4	1	2	7
Seminar/Workshop			1	1
Unspecified degree type	4	4		8
Total	20	8	8	36

52. Total English-language teaching experience Min 2; Max 34; Mean 15.06 years

53. Total English-language teaching experience *in Thailand* Min 2; Max 34; Mean 12.88 years

54. Did you teach or are you teaching subject(s) other than English language?
   - 0 □ 38 (60%) No
   - 1 □ 25 (40%) Yes

   Please list subjects taught during the past three (3) years.
   [Note: Some "Yes" participants did not provide information in all columns.]

What subject?	For how long? (in months or years)
(4) Language other than English (3) Business-related subjects (3) Education-related subjects (3) IT-related subjects (3) Public speaking / Presentation (2) Intercultural Communication (2) Linguistics (2) Social Studies-related subjects (1) Communication Arts (1) Critical Discourse Analysis (1) Current Trends (unspecified subject) (1) History (1) Hospitality-related subjects (1) Mathematics (1) Nursing (1) Psychology (1) Reasoning (1) Research Writing (1) Translation (1) TOEFL/TOEIC course	Min 0.3 years Max 10 years Mean 3.17 years

55. Did you work in any non-education field(s) before coming into teaching?
   - 0 □ 27 (43%) No
   - 1 □ 36 (57%) Yes

   Please list three (3) most recent fields before coming into teaching.

What field/industry?	For how long? (in months or years)
[See table below]	[Cannot be calculated as some participants worked in multiple fields simultaneously]

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What was your last field and position before coming into education?

Field or industry	Last field/industry	Last position
(10) Business (4) Banking / Finance (4) Hospitality (4) IT (3) Medicine (2) Biology / Environmental Science (2) Legal (1) British Council (1) Call center (1) Christian missionary (1) Communication arts (1) Counseling (1) Embassy (1) Engineering (1) Food service (1) Music (1) NGO (1) Technical writing (1) Training (1) Translation	(8) Business (4) IT (3) Banking / Finance (3) Medicine (2) Biology / Environmental Science (2) Hospitality (2) Legal (1) British Council (1) Call center (1) Christian Missionary (1) Communication arts (1) Counseling (1) Engineering (1) Food service (1) NGO (1) Technical writing (1) Training (1) Translation	(13) General staff (9) Managerial position (4) Scientist / Researcher / Medical practitioner (3) Trainer / Instructor (2) Editor (2) Interpreter / Translator (1) Counselor

56. What type of institution do you currently work at?
    - 1 □ 30 (48%) Public (government) college or university
    - 2 □ 33 (52%) Private college or university
    - 3 □ 0 (0%) Other (please specify)

    [Total number of institutions: 10 public; 12 private]

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57. What is/are your current role(s) or position(s) in your institution (select all that apply)?
    - 57-1 □ 3 (5%) Administrative or management position (e.g., head of department)
    - 57-2 □ 2 (3%) Policy maker
    - 57-3 □ 4 (6%) Policy administrator
    - 57-4 □ 6 (10%) Policy implementer
    - 57-5 □ 62 (98%) Teacher / Lecturer
    - 57-6 □ 6 (10%) Other (please specify)

    (3) Course coordinator
    (2) Academic committee member
    (1) Researcher

VITA

NAME	Miss Benjamas Dhammarungruang
DATE OF BIRTH	January 1979
PLACE OF BIRTH	Bangkok, Thailand
INSTITUTIONS ATTENDED	Syracuse University, Syracuse, New York, USA The Ohio State University, Columbus, Ohio, USA Chulalongkorn University, Bangkok, Thailand

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