

## **Qualities of effective EFL English teachers as perceived by Thai university students: A photovoice study**

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Teachers are often viewed as a resource of knowledge, important role models for students, and key agents to the lives of students. Thus, understanding the qualities of an effective teacher is indispensable for effective teaching and learning and the success of the education system at large. This study attempts to identify qualities of effective EFL English teachers as perceived by Thai university students, using a qualitative method, photovoice. The participants in this study were 26 students (11 males, 15 females) from a university in Thailand, with an age range between 18 and 24. The findings revealed four main themes that could best reflect the qualities of effective EFL English teachers as perceived by the participants in the context. The themes included teachers' classroom instruction skills, their subject matter knowledge, pedagogical knowledge, and socio-affective skills. In conclusion, this study built on the existing conceptual framework of effective EFL English teachers, and provides guidelines for teachers, universities, and policymakers in preparing or hiring English teachers.

### **Introduction**

Broadly, teachers are often viewed as a resource of knowledge, important role models for students, and key agents to the lives of students, and beyond, communities. Teachers are critical components of the teaching and learning process (Jain & Prasad, 2018), and for the success of the education system irrespective of the subjects they teach. Teachers, in general, should be competent enough to be able to demonstrate the best of their professionalism and perform all educational activities at their capacity to bring better change in students' learning outcomes and the education system. English language teaching (ELT) teachers are by no means exceptional and they play a major role in the development of students' language outcomes. Their role is more critical when non-English-speaking students are involved, such as in the ESL/EFL contexts. The belief is that these students lack language exposure and language learning happens primarily in the classroom only (Mohandas & Vinitwatanakhun, 2020). Therefore, ELT teachers, institutions, and policymakers need to understand the good qualities of English language teachers.

Although much has been written on the characteristics and qualities of an effective English teacher in the area where non-native English learners are involved (Alzeebaree & Zebari, 2021; Kwangsawad, 2017; Said, 2017; Yuan & Hu, 2018), there is still a need for further research, especially from contexts where English proficiency is very low, like in Thailand. Thailand was ranked 89th out of 100 countries/regions and 20th out of 24 countries in Asia, according to EF EPI (English First English Proficiency Index, 2020), indicating a very low English proficiency. Additionally, Hadi et al. (2021) and Khamkhong

(2017) noted that Thai students are usually passive and shy, especially when the English language is involved. Therefore, it is worthwhile exploring the good qualities of English teachers as perceived by students in such a context, to help teachers, institutions, and policymakers understand their needs. It should be also noted that language teachers in EFL contexts including Thailand are important influences upon the continuing development of English as a world language.

Cotterall (1999) noted that it is worth investigating students' beliefs, perceptions, and experiences for teachers to understand their needs and expectations of the subject. Considering this, the present study aims to explore the qualities of an effective English teacher as perceived by Thai university EFL students. In addition, to the best of the authors' knowledge, first, no previous studies conducted on effective English teachers have used qualitative photovoice methodology, especially in the EFL context, which is believed to be one of the most appropriate methods of providing evidence to reach policymakers (Wang & Redwood-Jones, 2001). Second, although the Thai Ministry of Education has put in a lot of effort to improve the quality of English teachers in Thailand (Chumworatayee, 2019), Thailand is still facing problems with qualified English teachers (Dueraman & Tunsakul, 2018). Furthermore, there is a dearth of literature on effective English teachers as perceived by Thai native undergraduate students enrolled at international college, where all the subjects including English are learned using English as a medium. These are added reasons to conduct this study. Although the design of the study is context-dependent, the findings of this study would potentially help EFL teachers in Thailand and in other countries to evaluate, reflect and improve their teaching methods; institutions to hire quality teachers, and finally policymakers and educational stakeholders to develop appropriate and effective policies. With these intentions, the present study seeks to answer the following research question.

What are the perceived good qualities of EFL English teachers according to Thai university EFL students?

## **Literature review**

This section presents a literature review on the qualities of effective English teachers in general and in relevant studies from EFL contexts. Before looking into the qualities of effective teachers and EFL English teachers *per se*, readers need to note the alphanumeric definition of 'effective' teacher in this context as 'effective' is often defined in a numeric form. In this study, hereafter, an effective teacher means a 'good' or 'outstanding' teacher (Goodley, 2018).

### **Qualities of an effective teacher**

Robinson and Lewis (2017) conducted a qualitative phenomenological study and explored the perceived good qualities of effective teachers. Nine teachers with significant teaching experiences participated in their study. The data were collected through interviews which included both semi-structured and open-ended questions. The findings demonstrated six typologies of an effective teacher, namely anti-deficit teachers -- teachers who look up to

the best examples; cultural pedagogue -- teachers who know, understand, and respect students' cultural backgrounds; love -- teachers who know that they are being loved for their efforts and contributions to the students learning and institutions; conductor/coach -- teachers who serve as a responsible person to the lives of students, parents and communities as a whole; warm-demanders -- teachers who have high expectations from students with positive relationships maintained; and golden rulers -- teachers who provide supports to the students and treat as what they would want from their loved ones.

Ida (2017) carried out a similar study on what makes a good teacher. Data were collected from 43 secondary students studying at a prestigious school in Heves County through a questionnaire and written composition on effective teachers. Although they claimed that the perceived quality of a good teacher varied from one student to another, the top qualities of a good teacher included: teachers who make students understand the teaching material well; are good looking and objective; pay good attention to the students and their problems; and help resolve students' problems and encourage them.

Haider and Jalal (2018) looked into the qualities of a good teacher through the lens of students in an Indian context. Thirty students of 11th grade from two schools participated in their open-ended survey questionnaire. The study pointed out several good qualities of a teacher, such as a good teacher should be a motivator; a good listener; practice student-centred teaching; hardworking and skillful; friendly, good looking, unbiased, honest, and bound by principles; and possess light-hearted personalities.

Although several studies investigated the qualities of effective teachers, the reported qualities of effective teachers seem to vary from one study to another. Nevertheless, in general, an effective teacher can be understood as follows: passionate about teaching (Coombe, 2019; Habib, 2017); committed to students' engagement in learning and outcomes through various strategies (Roy & Halder, 2018); dedicating themselves in developing a relationship with students (Leggio & Terras, 2019); being inquisitive and a lifelong learner (Le Roux, 2002; Swargiary & Baglari, 2018; Wangdi & Tharchen, 2021); socially skillful (e.g., friendly, kind, humorous, empathy, good communication skills, etc) (Arikan et al., 2008; Chuyun Hu, 2020; Norton & Nussbaum, 1980; Robinson & Lewis, 2017); and possessing good knowledge and experience of the subject area(s) (Külekcı, 2018).

### **Studies on qualities of effective EFL teachers**

Ever since the English language has become a global language, there has been a tremendous shift in attitudes towards the English language in many non-English speaking countries (Short et al., 2001), including Thailand (Wiriyachitra, 2002). Despite this, many would agree that not many countries are satisfied with the English language outcomes for their students, especially in EFL contexts. There are several factors at play that shape the success of foreign language acquisition (Mohammed, 2018), such as learning environment, cultural background, language exposure, mother tongue influence, attitudes, motivation, social status, education policy, teacher's personality, and others that impede learners seeking to master the target language. Of numerous factors that determine the language

outcomes for students, teachers are often viewed as a major factor and a primary source of language input in EFL contexts. For this reason, educators must understand the qualities of effective English teachers. With that being said, a number of research studies have conducted to identify good qualities of EFL English teachers through the lens of students, teachers, and other stakeholders' perceptions and beliefs. Some previous empirical studies are discussed here, that are relevant to the present study.

Alzebaree and Zebari (2021) investigated the perceived good qualities of English teachers in an Iraq context, based on teachers' subject knowledge, language proficiency, and socio-affective skills. The study was quantitative and data were collected through a questionnaire from 122 eleventh grade high school students in Duhok city in the Iraqi Kurdistan region. This study found that participants placed more importance on teachers' language proficiency when compared with the other two variables. Although not significantly there was a slight difference in mean values between these three variables, of which teachers' language proficiency was marked as having the highest mean.

Zamani and Ahangari (2016) investigated the perceived good qualities of EFL teachers according to Iranian students majoring in teaching English language and translation. The participants were 60 EFL BA and MA students from the Asad University of Tabriz. The study used questionnaires and open-ended questions covering major categories of English language teacher activities, namely language proficiency, pedagogical knowledge, organisation and communications skills, and social-affective skills. The findings reported some qualities of English language teachers that Iranian students placed more value on, including that English language teachers should maintain a good relationship with students, be able to build confidence within students, and maintain discipline in the classroom.

Similarly, Said (2017) explored the perceived characteristics of effective English teachers in an Indonesian context. The participants were 270 Indonesian undergraduate students at two private universities in Jakarta. They were asked to complete a survey questionnaire that covered seven dimensions of good teaching and learning the English language, namely encouraging contact between students and faculty; developing reciprocity and cooperation among students; using active learning techniques; giving prompt feedback; emphasising time on task; communicating high expectations, and respecting diversity in talents and ways of learning. On the whole, the findings reported that Indonesian students perceived these seven dimensions of English teachers as beneficial in improving the learning environment. Among these, the findings highlighted that students in their context acknowledged three dimensions the most, namely using active learning, giving prompt feedback, and communicating high expectations.

In another study, Alzobiani (2020) investigated the qualities of good English teachers as perceived by Saudi Arabian students and teachers. This quantitative study collected data through questionnaires from 150 students and 40 teachers in public intermediate schools. The study categorised teachers' qualities into two types, namely instructional skills and personal traits. The findings revealed that both Saudi students and teachers viewed teachers' instructional skills as more important than personal traits. However, upon

comparing students' and teachers' perceptions on these two variables of teachers' qualities, teachers placed more value on the personal traits than instructional skills and students' vice versa.

Similarly, Yuan and Hu (2018) explored the perceived good qualities of English teachers from pre-and in-service university teachers in China, using data collected through focus group interviews. Findings highlighted several qualities, including teachers being knowledgeable, visionary, supportive and caring, etc. Likewise, there are many studies conducted in Thai contexts. For instance, Kwangsawad (2017) gathered data from 472 students, 34 pre-service teachers, and 70 school administrators in EFL at Mahasarakham University, Thailand. The study reported that the perceived good characteristics of EFL teachers varied between groups of participants. For example, the top three qualities that students valued for effective English teachers included teachers' knowledge of the subject, teachers being able to maintain a good student-teacher relationship, and the personal traits of EFL teachers. While pre-service teachers valued teachers' professional attributes, teachers' pedagogical knowledge, and characteristics of good English teachers, the school administrators marked teachers' professional attributes, teachers' interpersonal skills, and EFL teachers' pedagogical approaches as the topmost qualities of effective EFL teachers.

Chanmanee (2018) conducted a mixed-methods research design emphasising the qualities of good English teachers as perceived by teachers and students, and differences between the two. Data were collected through a questionnaire and semi-structured interviews from 169 12th grade students and 25 English teachers teaching in high school. Among many good qualities of effective teachers highlighted, the author reported that while teachers placed more importance on socio-affective skills, students placed more value on English teachers' pedagogical knowledge.

In another study, Chen (2012) investigated favourable and unfavourable qualities of EFL teachers as perceived by Thai university students, using open-ended questions and interviews to collect data. The participants were 60 EFL undergraduate students at Vongchavalitkul University. The findings underscored the favourable and unfavourable qualities of English teachers based on two perspectives, personal trait-related (including emotion, kindness, fairness, lenience, and responsibility), and classroom teaching-related (including lesson delivery, language used in teaching, classroom activity organisation, and classroom atmosphere creation).

The empirical studies discussed above indicate that perceived good qualities of EFL English teachers vary from one context to another, and even from one stakeholder to another. In other words, the findings seem inconsistent, which gives us a further reason to conduct this study. Most importantly, none of the studies discussed thus far both in Thailand and other EFL contexts have attempted to use qualitative photovoice methodology which is believed to be one of the most appropriate methods of obtaining visually-based evidence for presenting to policymakers (Wang & Redwood-Jones, 2001). Considering that variation of research methods is required to generate new insights and to avoid inconclusive findings (Miles, 2017; Müller-Bloch & Kranz, 2015), this study was conducted. Whilst many may argue that there is abundant literature on effective English

teachers in EFL contexts, it should be noted that education system functioning can change rapidly, and concurrently the needs of students can change. Thus, policymakers, institutions, and teachers are required to keep themselves updated.

## **Method**

This study employed the qualitative photovoice method to generate the perceived good qualities of EFL English teachers from Thai university students. Photovoice is a participatory action research (PAR) method developed by Wang and Burris (1994, 1997). This method is believed to be a powerful technique through which individuals can assess the strength and concerns of the community by providing visual evidence to reach policymakers (Wang & Redwood-Jones, 2001). This visually-based methodology has gained popularity for its wide applicability (Latz & Mulvihill, 2017; Povee et al., 2014). It has been used successfully in the fields of education, disability studies, public health, and refugee studies (Rania et al., 2019; Sutton-Brown, 2014). The belief is that photovoice allows individual researchers to uncover a deeper understanding of participants' perspectives of community through a specific photographic technique. Likewise, there are several benefits mentioned in the literature that seemed evident. The core benefits of photovoice methodology include its flexibility for different participants (e.g., St. John et al., 2018), irrespective of their age and gender; it is inexpensive (Davison et al., 2011); participants enjoy it and it's more engaging (Wass et al., 2020), and finally, it enables participants to assess community needs through their own stories and ideas (Wang & Burris, 1997). Admittedly, photovoice methodology is believed to be more appropriate for dealing with children since it is less intimidating and notably more engaging (Alaca et al., 2017).

## **Participants**

The study was conducted at Prince of Songkla University International college (PSUIC), Hatyai Campus, Thailand. The participants were recruited using a convenience sampling method. A total of 26 first-year university students (males 11, females 15) with an age range between 18 and 24 years participated. They were majoring in digital media and all subjects including English were taught in English medium. For this reason, all the students enrolled at PSUIC were required to obtain a certain English proficiency level score i.e., TOEIC 450 or other equivalent English proficiency test scores (TOEFL(PBT) 470; (TOEFL(CBT) 150; (TOEFL(IBT) 50; IELTS 4.5; PSU-GET 60) for admission. The participants were all Thai natives and they spoke Thai and English as media of communication.

## **Data collection**

A review article by Suprpto and Sunarti (2020) highlighted several methods for data collection when using qualitative photovoice methodology, including pre-interviews, observations/documentation, photography training, and post-interviews. As for this study, the data collection involved three phases: photography training, collection of photos, and group discussion, and focus group interviews. The details are given below. Before

proceeding to data collection, informed consent was obtained from both the faculty of the Prince of Songkla University and participants. The participants who agreed to participate in this study were also given an option to withdraw at any time.

### **Photography training**

This was conducted via *Zoom* as it fell during the Covid pandemic. In the first phase, participants were introduced to the research objectives of this study and the process of data collection. Understanding the process of data collection was imperative in this study because we assumed that not many of the participants had given data in the form of photos. Therefore, participants were provided with a few samples of photovoice data with a clear explanation found in previous research studies (e.g., Wang & Burris, 1997; Wass et al., 2020). Following this, each participant was asked to take a minimum of five and a maximum of ten photos that would best describe/depict the qualities of an effective English teacher in their context. The participants were given the option to use their creativity and personal mobile phones to take photos, provided photos were taken by themselves. They were instructed that photos should be clear, not edited, and not revealing their own or other's identities (Yeager & Rennie, 2021). To facilitate this, participants were given two weeks for submission.

### **Collection of photos**

The participants were asked to submit their best three photos with a short description under each selected photo, explaining why they decided to select each one, and how it related to effective English teachers. Participant submitted their photos via *Google Classroom*. The researchers then reviewed and re-reviewed all photos (78 photos with descriptions), from which thirty photos were selected for the final 'group discussion'. The thirty photos were randomly selected by agreement between the researchers, based on their clarity and appropriateness (e.g., originality, colour combination, less photo noise, etc.). Some photos were excluded because the participants failed to follow the instructions and were found insufficiently relevant to the research objectives.

### **Group discussion and focus group interviews**

In the following weeks, the participants were invited to take part in the final group discussion via *Zoom*. The participants were randomly grouped into five clusters (Table 1) with five to six students in each group. Participants were pseudo named as P1, P2, – P26 to preserve confidentiality. From the thirty photos selected by the researchers, each group was randomly assigned six photos for a group discussion, which lasted for about 25 minutes. Each group was asked to discuss and choose three photos from their assigned six that best depicted the qualities of effective English teachers. They were also instructed and given options to add any additional information/points generated from the discussion under the chosen three photographs, to make it more meaningful. Meanwhile, the researchers moved from one group to another, five minutes in each group, to observe the group discussion. Notes were also taken to complement the video recording and interview

data. After 25 minutes, three selected photos from each group were collected to discuss in the interviews and saved for analysis.

Following this, the group interviews were conducted. For this, the researcher joined each cluster group to pose questions on the three photos that the group had selected. Questions included, why has your group decided to select this photo? How does this photo represent the English teacher's qualities? What are some qualities of English teachers that you can relate to in these selected photos (e.g., how does this headphone depict the qualities of a good English teacher?) What would be the most important qualities of English teachers for Thai students? How do you assess your English teachers? Several questions followed these semi-structured interviews, based on the participants' responses. The focus group interviews took 15 to 20 minutes for each group. These group interviews were conducted to check the accuracy of the descriptions that the participants had written under each chosen photograph and to enhance the researchers' understanding of their views. The *Zoom* videos were recorded and notes were taken throughout the interviews. The final step included documentation of photos with descriptions. Notes taken during the interviews were also documented and recorded videos were saved for analysis.

Table 1: Participants in each group

Group	Participants number (P) (Gender =M/F/Age)
1	P1 (M, 19); P6 (M, 21); P13 (F, 20); P18 (F, 19); P22 (F, 21), and P26 (F, 19)
2	P2 (F, 21); P7 (M, 24); P14 (M, 22); P16 (F, 19), and P23 (F, 20)
3	P3 (F, 19); P10 (F, 21); P11 (M, 22); P19 (F, 22), and P21 (M, 23)
4	P4 (M, 23); P9 (F, 19); P12 (M, 21); P20 (F, 20), and P25 (F, 19)
5	P3 (F, 19); P8 (F, 20); P15 (M, 23); P17 (M, 20), and P24 (M, 20)

## Analysis

Following Braun and Clarke's (2006) guidelines, the data were thematically analysed. Data triangulation was attempted to increase the validity and credibility of the findings by considering data from various sources (e.g., discussion notes, interviews' transcripts, and photos with descriptions). In addition, before writing/reporting the findings, the chosen photos with descriptions written by the participants, presented in this paper were discussed in the classrooms (via *Zoom*). At this stage, the participants were asked to identify the appropriateness of photos and errors in the descriptions. They were also given options to not to include their photos in this paper. However, no participant disagreed with the chosen photos, or identified any errors in descriptions. Thus, the data that are reported in this study were considered highly valid.

## Findings

The findings are thematically presented under four main themes: classroom instructional skills, subject matter knowledge, pedagogical knowledge, and socio-affective skills in both



pictorial and narrative forms. Each main theme is illustrated with several examples of photographs with brief descriptions written by participants.

### **Theme 1: Classroom instructional skills**

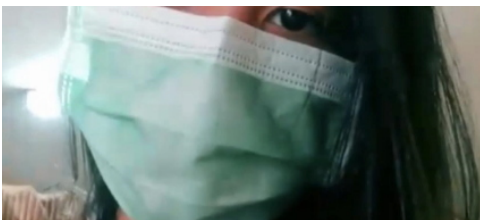
Under this main theme, several characteristics of effective English teachers emerged. Samples of photography and excerpts are illustrated below.

#### **Sample photograph 1**



The spoken language of an English teacher should be clear, understandable, and amplified. They should speak slowly and repeat many times as most Thai students are weak in English. Teachers' voices should be able to reach each student's ears just like the headphones which help enhance the quality of sounds or music. Teachers should be able to pronounce the English words correctly with good grammatical structure so that students can imitate teachers and learn the English language more effectively. They should let students ask questions if they are not clear about the content.

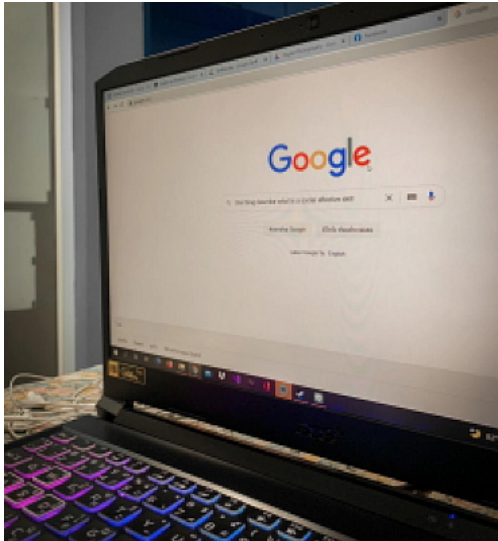
#### **Sample photograph 2**



The English teachers should be like a face mask. Teachers should have the ability to filter information, content, and words while giving lectures in the classroom. They should provide a clear objective of the lesson and point out why this lesson is important for the students. They should be able to give a clear concept of the particular content by using comprehensive and easy words that best suit the students' ability.

## Theme 2: Subject matter knowledge

The second theme concerns teachers' subject matter knowledge.



### Sample photograph 3

In our opinion, the effective English teachers can relate to Google search engine through which we can search all kinds of information using the internet and apply it in our daily life. Effective teachers should serve as sources of knowledge who can give answers to students' doubts and problems, especially when the content is related to the subject that the teacher is responsible for.



### Sample photograph 4

In our perspective, an effective teacher is a great composer. If the teacher is a composer, the music itself is like a student. Teachers need to be as creative as a composer. At the same time, they need to be open as there are different types of music. In addition, great composers need to have a deep understanding of the elements of music. An English teacher will be more effective if he or she understands the content, composition, and grammar well. Teachers need to know in-depth, but may not necessarily know very broadly.

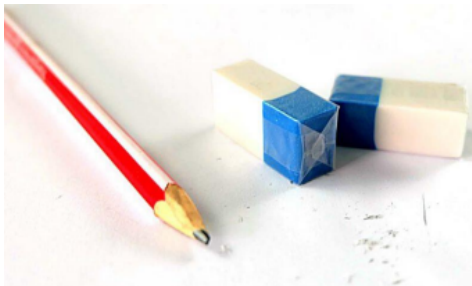
### 3: Pedagogical knowledge

The third theme under effective English teachers emerged as teachers' pedagogical knowledge.



**Sample photograph 5**

Effective English teachers should be creative and it is important as it projects the ability of teachers in so many ways. If you survey students' willingness to learn English, we are almost sure that most of the students are not interested in learning English, especially in Thailand. However, if teachers use their creativity in teaching students. For example, using technology, multimedia, and other teaching methods may help students to change their attitude towards learning English. And, using different creative methods of teaching may also improve students' interaction in the classroom, resulting in better outcomes.



**Sample photograph 6**

A good English teacher should be like a pencil and eraser in the picture. They should have a good spirit to teach students. They should use their abilities to help students learn what is correct and unlearn what is not correct. Teachers should give students both negative and positive feedbacks, comments, and suggestions so that students can learn effectively and improve their English language.



**Sample photograph 7**

English teachers in this 21st century should teach their students how to learn outside the classroom. Teachers should serve as a guide or mentor and help students open the doors of knowledge because everything is accessible in this digital era. They should inspire students to be self-independent learners and support students instead of just teaching in the classroom.

#### **Theme 4: Socio-affective skills**

Teachers' socio-affective skill is the fourth theme that could best illustrate the qualities of effective English teachers.



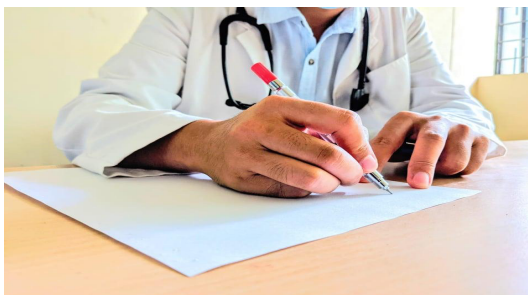
##### **Sample photograph 8**

English teachers should be calm, gentle, passionate, and with smiles on their faces. They should always stay positive about teaching. They should be able to bring fun to the classroom. They should interact with students and try to know their students. They should treat students with respect, dignity, and give positivity.



##### **Sample photograph 9**

Effective English teachers should be accessible everywhere just like water. Just like water help us to remain hydrated and alive. Teachers should help students learn what is needed as a person and to prepare themselves to fit in society. We must not forget that students spend more than 8 hours a day at university and with teachers. Teachers are indeed our second parents. Therefore, they should be the first person to advise and guide us what is wrong and right in our life while we are at university.



##### **Sample photograph 10**

An effective English teacher should be like a doctor. They should pay attention to all individual students in the classroom just like a doctor does with his/her patient. Teachers should ask students about their problems and show sympathy to students with problems. Teachers should help students feel comfortable both inside and outside the classroom. All teachers should be approachable.

## Discussion

The primary objective of this research was to explore the qualities of effective EFL teachers from the perspective of Thai EFL university students, using photovoice methodology. Although much has been written about effective EFL teachers, to the best of the authors' knowledge, no previous studies have used photovoice methodology to investigate this phenomenon. Thus, considering that variation of research methods is required to generate new insights and to consolidate the findings (Miles, 2017; Müller-Bloch & Kranz, 2015), this study was conducted to fill this gap. In doing this, the findings revealed four main themes that could best illustrate/depict the qualities of effective EFL teachers: teachers' classroom instructional skills; subject matter knowledge; pedagogical knowledge; and socio-affective skills

In line with Alzobiani (2020), this study reported *teachers' classroom instructional skills* as one of the prominent qualities of a good English teacher. It is believed that teachers with good instructional skills make students understand the subject materials well (Ida, 2017). The belief is also that teachers with good instructional skills help promote students' learning and improve their learning outcomes (Lavilles et al., 2017). Thus, the findings of this study suggest EFL English teachers need to use specific strategies of instruction that suit students' abilities and requirements, to yield better outcomes. As for students in this context, they expect English teachers to provide clear objectives of the lesson to be taught, emphasising its importance for students to learn, giving students opportunities to ask questions for clarification, speaking slowly and repeating when necessary, and pronouncing spoken words clearly with an accurate grammatical structure. Interestingly, some previously conducted studies in the Thai context (e.g., Chanmanee, 2018; Chen, 2012; Kwangsawad, 2017) have not identified teachers' instructional skills as a crucial quality for English teachers. The mentioned studies in the context have highlighted the qualities of effective English teachers from the perspectives of teachers' subject matter knowledge, pedagogical knowledge, and socio-affective skills/personal traits. Therefore, this study provides a new factor for effective English teachers that is worth considering while preparing or hiring English language teachers for Thai universities, which is teachers' instructional skills,

In addition, the findings indicated that student-participants also placed importance on the *teachers' subject matter knowledge*. The finding was in congruence with many previous studies that reported teachers' subject matter knowledge as one of the key factors for teachers in general (e.g., Külekçi, 2018) and EFL English teachers (e.g., Alzebaree & Zebari; 2021; Chanmanee, 2018; Chen, 2012; Kwangsawad; 2017; Yuan & Hu; 2018). Given this, ESL/EFL English teachers need to understand students' expectations when teachers' subject matter knowledge is a concern. Essentially, qualities highlighted by the present participants in relation to teachers' subject matter knowledge included having a deep understanding of the subject, teaching based on applications in daily life, being readily available to answer all sorts of questions concerning the subject taught, and ability to read and write English very well without any grammatical errors. That said, in the interviews, a few participants stressed that learning has now become collaborative learning. Both

teachers and students should be involved in progressing from a 'glass-half-full' perspective, towards helping each other to make it a 'full glass' circumstance. This indicates that not all students view teachers' subject matter knowledge as an unqualified important quality of English teachers. Some tend to acknowledge that students themselves also need to be involved in furthering the subject knowledge perspective, through their own learning, practising, and developing of English language skills.

The third quality of English teachers was their *pedagogical knowledge*. As highlighted in previous studies (e.g., Haider & Jalal, 2018; Kwangsawad, 2017; Roy & Halder, 2018), one of the key indicators that define an effective teacher is their pedagogical knowledge; the findings from this study also suggested the same. Several qualities emerged that may help ESL/EFL English teachers to evaluate and reflect upon their pedagogical knowledge. Qualities worth noting included that teacher should know how to manage classrooms well with appropriate teaching strategies. As pointed out by participants, most Thai students are disinterested in learning English, and also as noted by Hadi et al. (2021) and Khamkhong (2017), students in this context are usually passive and shy, especially when the English language is involved. This indicates that English teachers in this context should make their lessons more interesting, fun, and interactive, to improve the learning environment. Supporting this, student participants commented that teachers should integrate multimedia and ICT tools to make English learning more fun and interesting. They also stated that implementing these methods would bring positive changes to student learning. Besides, the benefits of ICT integration on students' learning have been discussed at length by some previous studies (see, Milla et al., 2019; Le, 2020). Thus, ESL/EFL English teachers should seek to integrate ICT tools in English teaching, to help create a conducive learning environment. Additionally, it seems that non-native English-speaking students expect teachers to provide frequent feedback on their learning progress, and continuous guidance on learning English and 'unlearning' as required.

Finally, upon asking 'What would be the most important characteristics of English teachers for Thai students?' and from photo descriptions, the student-participants responded that teachers should be friendly, sympathetic, caring, lovely, kind, carry smiles on their faces, and support students well, most of which were socio-affective skills. This implies that student-participant in this study duly appreciated and placed importance on *teachers' socio-affective skills*. The perceived good qualities of English teachers highlighted by student participants in this study were consistent with some qualities reported by the previous studies conducted in EFL contexts (e.g., Chanmanee, 2018; Ida, 2017; Said, 2017; Yuan & Hu, 2018). Other reported qualities of English teachers under socio-affective skills, those especially worth noting included English teachers should be approachable and accessible to students at any given time, give proper advice and guidance, interact frequently with students, respect individual differences of students learning abilities, and treat them equally.

Although the strength of this study is in the method employed and the context, where the nation is still striving to have teachers of good quality (Dueraman & Tunsakul, 2018) and have students improve their English language outcomes (English First English Proficiency Index, 2020), there are several limitations. The sample size was small and the photographs



presented here lack the standards of professional photographers. However, it is important to note that the primary objective of this study was to delve into the perceived good qualities of EFL English teachers and not photography. Also, there are possible biases in the nature of participants. Students are unlikely to be highly critical, for example by referring to qualities of poor or ineffective English teachers. Thus, we advise being cautious before the conclusion on the characteristics of English teachers is drawn. That said, future researchers may wish to further investigate the types of English teacher qualities that ESL/EFL students regard with more importance, including the reasons behind their priorities, whether it is teachers' classroom instructional skills, subject matter knowledge, pedagogical knowledge, or socio-affective skills. Future research may also look into the perceived differences and similarities of the characteristics/qualities of English teachers between high language achievers and low language achievers, and also between males and females, to corroborate the present findings.

## Conclusion

This study addressed the perceived good qualities of EFL English teachers from the perspective of Thai university students, using a photovoice methodology. Four main themes emerged, namely teachers' classroom instructional skills, their subject matter knowledge, pedagogical knowledge, and socio-affective skills. This study built on conceptual frameworks from previous research and presented a novel research method for investigating stakeholders' perceptions, beliefs, and experiences. Additionally, this study provided concise guidelines for EFL teachers to evaluate and reflect on their stance as EFL teachers and to improve accordingly. Teachers are critically important components for learning English, therefore, the findings of this study suggest that EFL teachers, institutions, and universities of Thailand in particular, consider the teachers' socio-affective skills of English teachers when preparing or hiring English language teachers.

Finally, John Creswell, an eminent authority on qualitative methods in education research, stated "I like the technique of 'photo elicitation' in which participants are shown pictures (either their own or those taken by the researcher) and asked by the inquirer to discuss the contents of the pictures as in photovoice (Creswell & Poth, 2016; Wang & Burris, 1994)". Therefore, we strongly suggest future researchers use photovoice methodology. It has been used only sparingly in educational fields, though benefits may be obtained through visual-based evidence. It is also engaging and inexpensive for participants, as they can use their own mobile phones. Also, one belief is that pictures speak louder than words, thus giving the researcher a better perspective of phenomena as viewed by participants. Further, we observed that the participants also enjoyed the whole process of data collection, particularly photography and developing analogies based on the research objectives.

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