

## What Makes an Ideal English Teacher? Thai Secondary School Students' Perceptions

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Article information	
<b>Abstract</b>	English teachers, who are in close contact with students in terms of language training and development, have been studied for their impacts on students' language learning. However, what really secondary school students in Thailand perceive of their ideal English teachers has not been conducted. This study aims to explore Thai secondary school students' perceptions of English teachers and to examine latent factors underlying their perceptions. Using an online questionnaire on English teachers' characteristics and qualifications, this study employed a descriptive survey and exploratory factor analysis (EFA) on 267 Thai lower and upper secondary school students, who were conveniently and snowballing recruited. The results of the survey showed the highest ratings for socio-affective skills and interpersonal relationships between the two groups. Qualitative written responses on the questionnaire revealed that ideal English teachers were low-anxiety teachers who used communicative and innovative pedagogy and differentiated caring teaching. EFA revealed shifting characteristics from two-factor lower secondary school English teachers to three-factor upper secondary school English teachers. Socio-affective skills and innovative pedagogy were two major factors, with language proficiency becoming a separate factor in upper secondary school. The results have implications on teachers' personal characteristics and innovative pedagogy trainings as well as policymakers to revise their language policy in Thailand.
<b>Keywords</b>	English teachers, qualification, secondary school students, perception
<b>APA citation:</b>	Kanokpermpoon, M., & Sanongpong, I. C. (2026). What makes an ideal English teacher? Thai secondary school students' perceptions. <i>PASAA Journal</i> , 72, 19–46.

### 1. Introduction

The Thai educational system has valued teachers as “boats” that guide students from their first day of school to graduation (Noyjarean, 2015). This “boat” metaphor, in accordance with Thai cultural understandings, implies not only academic support but also relational closeness. In other words, the teacher accompanies learners as a shared journey, provides moral guidance, and remains responsible for students' learning progress. In this sense, this metaphor embodies trust, guidance, and respect in the student-teacher relationship. However, Wongthai (2022) challenged this view in that teachers in Thailand were regarded as both “engines” driving educational progress and “artisans” crafting knowledge and skills in their students.

Unlike “boat,” these metaphors reflect a perception shift in that teachers rigorously train students to become highly skilled outcomes of the education system. Consequently, the student-teacher relationship has transformed from close guidance as “boats” to one that is more instrumental, transaction, and emotionally distant in “engines” and “artisans.” This possible shift in teacher-student relationship becomes more apparent when considered alongside concerns about English education outcomes in Thailand.

In English education, the quality of teacher-student relationships can be acknowledged through students’ English proficiency outcomes (TESOL International Association, 2019). According to the EF English Proficiency Index (2024), Thailand ranked 106<sup>th</sup> out of 113 surveyed countries. Although this result has been methodologically challenged (Vernon et al., 2018), it is commonly interpreted as Thai students having low English proficiency. This raises questions about teachers’ teaching quality and preparedness in enhancing students’ English skills. Additionally, teachers’ own English proficiency can present further challenges. According to a report from the Ministry of Education’s Committee for the Promotion of Foreign Language Development for Communication for People of All Ages (May 2024), most English teachers in Thailand were at CEFR A2 level, followed by B1 and B2. Also, Kaewwichian and Jaturapitakkul (2018) found that the English proficiency of most Thai lower secondary EFL teachers was measured and self-perceived at the CEFR A2 level. The challenges in teacher language proficiency, coupled with students’ low English proficiency, raise the question of whether teachers function as “engines” and “artisans” (cf. Wongthai, 2022). Moreover, it is still uncertain whether teachers are still regarded as role models for students in language learning, and what their ideal English teachers would be like.

English teachers’ pedagogical approaches, professional development, and well-being represent additional factors for students’ ideal English teachers. According to the TESOL International Association (2019), secondary English teachers should demonstrate language and academic proficiencies. They are also expected to implement evidence-based and learner-centred instructional approaches. In practice, Poonpon (2021) found that Thai English teachers recognised the need to improve their speaking, listening, pronunciation, and cross-cultural communication skills. Participants also acknowledged gaps in their pedagogical and technological competencies. In addition, Imsa-ard (2024) found that burnout, a state of chronic workplace under-stimulation, significantly decreases the psychological well-being of Thai secondary school EFL teachers. These potentially impact their classroom management and practice. Given these teachers’ challenges in language development, ELT pedagogy, and personal well-being, it is uncertain whether students perceive these issues in their ideal English teachers.

Several studies (e.g., Flora et al., 2024; Han, 2016; Park & Lee, 2006; Thamrin, 2020) have shown that students’ perceptions of teacher competencies, such as clear communication and effective classroom management, are directly linked to improved academic outcomes and language proficiency. These positive student outcomes, in turn, are considered powerful indicators of successful teacher professional development (Poonpon, 2021). Students, therefore, serve as not only recipients of knowledge and instruction but also as direct evaluators of teachers’ teaching quality.

In Thailand, especially within the secondary school system, secondary students perceive their ideal English teachers from five different perspectives: English proficiency, teaching skills, socio-affective skills, classroom management, and professional development

(Flora et al. 2024; Guspita et al., 2023; Han, 2016; Opasrattanakorn & Soontornwipast, 2021; Park & Lee, 2006; Poonpon, 2021; Thamrin, 2020; TESOL International Association, 2019). It is important to consider these student perspectives as they can inform the design of English teachers' professional development programmes. Therefore, this study aims to explore secondary school students' perspectives on the "ideal English teacher," addressing the following two research questions:

1. What are Thai secondary school students' perceptions of English teachers?
2. What latent factors underlie Thai secondary school students' perceptions of English teachers?

## 2. Literature Review

### 2.1 Teachers' Characteristics

Several researchers (e.g. Park & Lee, 2006; Guspita et al., 2023; Thamrin, 2020) suggest that English teachers should demonstrate language and content knowledge, pedagogical skills, and socio-affective skills. According to Poonpon (2021), secondary school teachers in Thailand prefer mastering their own language ability and updating their pedagogical skills. This is similar to Park and Lee (2006) and Guaita et al. (2023). In their research, secondary school students appreciated English teachers who could communicate clearly, design engaging lessons, and create supportive classroom environments. In addition, Thamrin (2020) advocates for Indonesian English teachers' interpersonal skills in language pedagogy. Participants preferred teachers who could actively manage the classroom, develop creative materials, and provide meaningful feedback. This indicates that, while language ability is what English teachers prioritise, students prefer those who could teach and create pleasant learning environments.

In Thailand, teachers' characteristics can be viewed through metaphorical studies. In the study of Noyjarean (2015), Thai teachers are regarded as "candles" and "hiring boats." These metaphors represent teachers as a source of wisdom who could nurture individual students to learn. This is similar to Thamrin's (2020) study regarding teachers' socio-affective skills. Teachers should be dedicated individuals who take care of and guide students through their learning process. Also, Wongthai (2022) conducted another metaphorical study on Thailand's educational policy documents and found that teachers were regarded as "engines" and "artisan." "Engines" mean that teachers work strenuously to help students achieve and maintain their learning outcomes. As "artisans," teachers are expected to creatively design and adapt their lessons to reskill and upskill students. This means that teachers are regarded as service providers with goal-oriented purposes. The shifting metaphors from process to product are still questionable as to whether Thai students, who are the product of teachers' services, really agree with the policymakers.

From various stakeholders, English teachers in Thailand are expected to be competent in language and content, teaching skills, and socio-affective skills. Whether or not these characteristics hold true to the students' perspectives is in need of enquiry.

## **2.2 Teachers' Qualification**

According to the TESOL International Association (2019), English teachers are qualified to teach when they possess advanced language proficiency, understand second language learning process, use academic language, and practice evidence-based instruction.

In southern Thailand, Opasrattanakorn and Soontornwipast (2021) studied the expected qualifications of English teachers through a mixed-methods Delphi approach. Major qualifications for English teachers consisted of high language proficiency, content knowledge pedagogy, technological skills, and positive psychology. The most important clusters found were pedagogical competent and desirable personality traits. In other words, English teachers were expected to teach English effectively with positive energy and feelings.

In terms of language proficiency, Mala (2021, as cited in Poonpon, 2021) found that most English teachers were at the CEFR A2 level, followed by less than 50% at the B1 level. This finding is inconsistent with Thailand's educational policy in that English teachers should obtain at least the CEFR B1 level (OTEPC, 2024). According to Franz and Teo (2017), secondary school teachers were either unaware of or indifferent to the CEFR policy. They regarded CEFR as a testing requirement rather than a pedagogical framework. However, Charttrakul and Damnet (2021) found that university teachers agreed to adopt the CEFR policy, but in practice, the framework might not be applicable in the Thai context in terms of large classes, students' low language proficiency, and exam-oriented learning.

Regarding evidence-based instruction, Fadel et al. (2018) found that more than 4,200 English teachers in Thailand need professional development in communicative skills, such as speaking, listening, pronunciation, and cross-cultural communication. In addition, teachers needed innovative pedagogical strategies, such as creative materials development, game-based learning, 21<sup>st</sup>-century classroom management, and technology-assisted language instruction.

From the studies, teachers' qualifications derive from policymakers and in-service teachers. It is questionable whether these qualifications are perceived by their students. This study aimed to fulfill this gap.

## **2.3 Student perceptions of ideal English teachers**

Several studies (e.g., Han, 2016; Thamrin, 2020) advocate for students' perceptions to determine their teachers' qualifications. According to Han (2016), South Korean high school students rated teachers' interaction the highest, followed by assessment, content and language competences, teaching and classroom management skills, professional development, and material use. In contrast, Thamrin (2020) found that Indonesian English teachers' pedagogical qualifications were rated moderately to highly. Also, they lacked understanding learners, lesson preparation, and encouraging students.

In Thailand, Cheewasukthaworn (2025) found that undergraduate students perceived teacher-student rapport and well-prepared instruction as the most effective qualities of English teachers. Similarly, according to Wangdi and Shimray (2022), university students perceived instruction skills, subject knowledge, teaching skills, and socio-affective skills as major qualifications for effective language teaching. In another study by Lemana II et al. (2025), university students in southern Thailand had a positive perception towards non-native English teachers. They were engaging and pleasant in language learning environment. However, the participants identified fast-paced instruction, accent variations, and repetitive teaching approaches as significant obstacles to their language learning.

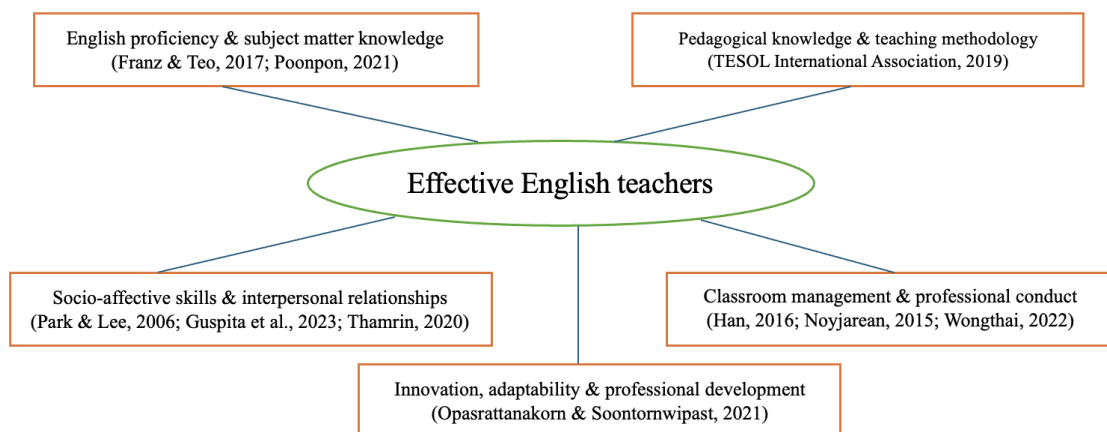
In conclusion, existing studies have shown that English teachers' qualifications vary across diverse cultural contexts. In the initial stages of secondary education, students in Asia highly valued socio-affective skills over pedagogical competence and content knowledge. However, at the tertiary level in Thailand, university students favour instruction and the classroom environment. This creates a gap in Thai secondary schools, as students' perceptions may differ from those of their university seniors or those in other cultural contexts.

## 2.4 Hypothesised ideal English teachers

Based on the existing literature review, the qualification of English teachers include five competency domains: English proficiency and subject matter knowledge, pedagogical knowledge and teaching methodologies, socio-affective skills and interpersonal relationships, classroom management and professional conduct, and innovation, adaptability, and professional development (Flora et al. 2024; Guspita et al., 2023; Han, 2016; Opasrattanakorn & Soontornwipast, 2021; Park & Lee, 2006; Poonpon, 2021; Thamrin, 2020; TESOL International Association, 2019). This hypothesised model is illustrated in Figure 1.

**Figure 1**

*Hypothesised Model of Ideal English Teachers*



As shown in Figure 1, it can be argued that the hypothesised model offers a comprehensive conceptualisation of an ideal English teacher. In other words, this model extends beyond existing literature (e.g., Flora et al. 2024; Guspita et al., 2023; Han, 2016; Park & Lee, 2006; TESOL International Association, 2019), in that it combines the five distinct characteristics into a single framework. In the present study, the model was used to examine how these characteristics cluster together in Thai secondary school students' perceptions. The findings would fill in a gap in literature in terms of the cluster characteristics of ideal English teachers in Thai secondary schools.

## 3. Methodology

This study employed a descriptive survey research design to explore secondary school students' perceptions of ideal English teachers in Thailand. An online questionnaire was used to gather ideal English teachers' characteristics and qualifications from secondary school students from Bangkok and its surrounding areas. Both quantitative and qualitative data were analysed to answer research question 1. Then, the exploratory factor analysis (EFA) was used

to find their factor-components for research question 2. In this study, the term “ideal English teachers” was used to mean an imagined English teachers’ characteristics and qualifications.

### **3.1 Participants**

In this study, convenience and snowball sampling techniques were used to recruit participants from twelve Thai secondary schools, including both government and demonstration schools in Bangkok and the metropolitan area. According to Biernacki and Waldorf (1981), snowball sampling was considered appropriate because it enables access to eligible participants through trusted peer and institutional networks. In the present study, the researchers contacted teachers from their school network to distribute an online questionnaire to their respective students. In addition, the questionnaire was posted on the researchers’ institute LINE groups and Facebook pages for further recruitment. A total of 267 secondary school students responded and returned the questionnaire, together with an ethical response. These participants were then stratified into two groups: 103 students in lower secondary school (Mathayom 1-3) and 164 students in upper secondary school (Mathayom 4-6).

### **3.2 Instrument**

An online questionnaire in Thai was adapted from Flora et al. (2024), Guspita et al. (2023), Han (2016), Park and Lee (2006), and TESOL International Association (2019). The study received ethical approval from the Human Research Ethics Committee (Social Sciences) of the researchers’ university (Approval No.: SSTU-CE 045/2568).

The questionnaire consisted of two main parts: background information and teachers’ characteristics and qualifications. The first part contained four items regarding age, current level of study, years of English study, and self-assessed CEFR level. In the second part, there were 30 Likert-scale statements on teachers’ characteristics and qualifications. These statements were adapted and designed based on the five-hypothesised model of ideal English teachers in Figure 1. Each model consisted of six statements with a five-point scale from 1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree.

In addition to the closed-ended items, one open-ended question asked students to describe their ideal English teacher in their own words. This open-ended prompt, “Write a short description of students’ ideal English teacher (about 5-10 sentences),” was used to complement students’ perception ratings. The question was identical for both lower and upper secondary groups. Participants could choose to write in English or Thai. The Thai-English translation was carefully reviewed by a translation expert.

Prior to the main data collection, the questionnaire was piloted with 30 secondary school students in Pathum Thani, a metropolitan area of Bangkok. Based on the pilot feedback, the statement, “Teachers use CLT principles to teach English,” was rephrased to “Teachers teach English for communication.” This is to avoid using technical terminology. The final version was then used in the present study.

The open-ended question was created based on the hypothesised five-domain model, but it was refined to be neutral, age-appropriate, and easily understood by secondary-level learners. The initial result of pilot study revealed that student participants wrote in short sentences. In the present study, the written question was added with “(about 5-10 sentences)” to elicit more responses.

To protect confidentiality, the questionnaire did not collect any direct information (e.g., students' names or surnames) and gathered only non-identifiable background information for analysis. The questionnaire was created and administered via Google Forms in Thai. All collected data were stored securely for one year and then permanently deleted from the database in accordance with the approved data storage plan.

Because participants were under 18, additional safeguards were implemented. Student participants received study information before participating, and teachers were informed not to interfere with students' responses. Informed consent procedures included (1) student assent and (2) parental/ legal-guardian consent, as required for minors aged 13-18. For respondents younger than 13, a parental permission document was required prior to participation. Participation was voluntary, and students could stop responding at any time without penalty.

Prior to distribution, the instrument was reviewed for clarity and content validity by three experts in English language teaching. The result of IOC was 0.95. Reliability of the Likert-scale items was later confirmed through Cronbach's alpha ( $\alpha = 0.98$ ). For exploratory factor analysis (EFA), the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin test ( $KMO = 0.94$ ) and Bartlett's test of sphericity ( $\chi^2 (435) = 25,847.34, p < 0.001$ ) confirmed that the data met all necessary assumptions and were suitable for further analysis.

### **3.3 Procedure**

Prior to data collection, this study was approved by the University Ethics Committee. Then, network teachers were initially contacted and informed about the research process. They were then given the questionnaire's URL or QR code to distribute it through teachers' networks. The questionnaire link was also posted on the researchers' institute's social media platforms from May to June 2025. This is to ensure sufficient time for data collection. Student participants were also informed about the research process and requested to provide their consent electronically. They could close the questionnaire whenever they preferred.

After the data collection period, the questionnaire data were exported from Google Forms to SPSS version 19.0.2.0 for descriptive and inferential analyses. The written responses were carefully, manually transcribed and translated into English with the agreement of two independent raters. Two raters independently coded the responses using agreed coding scheme based on the hypothesised model. Disagreements were discussed and resolved through consensus. To validate the coding, inter-coder reliability was calculated on 53 responses, resulting in percentage agreement = 82%. In addition, the lead researcher conducted a final audit by re-checking the full dataset against the final codebook to ensure internal consistency. Both sets of data were then analysed to answer the two research questions.

### **3.4 Data Analysis**

To answer research question 1, descriptive statistics were calculated into means and SD. The mean scores were assigned to numerical values. These are 4.20-5.00 = totally agree, 3.40-4.19 = agree, 2.60-3.39 = neutral, 1.80-2.59 = disagree, and 1.00-1.79 = totally disagree. After that, the written responses were manually coded into themes based on the hypothesised model of ideal English teachers.

To address research question 2, an exploratory factor analysis (EFA) with varimax rotation was used to identify the component factors of ideal English teachers' characteristics

and qualifications. Both lower and upper secondary school students' EFAs were then compared to confirm or reject the hypothesised model.

#### 4. Results/Findings

##### 4.1 Lower Secondary School Students' Perceptions of English Teachers

To answer research question 1, data from the questionnaire were analysed and presented below.

Table 1 presents the mean (M) and standard deviation (SD) scores for lower secondary school ( $n = 103$ ) and upper secondary school ( $n = 167$ ) students towards their ideal teachers. There are five parts of teachers' characteristics and qualification: (1) English proficiency and subject matter knowledge, (2) Pedagogical knowledge and teaching methodologies, (3) Socio-affective skills and interpersonal relationships, (4) Classroom management and professional conduct, and (5) Innovation, adaptability, and professional development.

**Table 1**

*Secondary School Students' Perceptions of English Teachers' Characteristics*

Statements	Lower secondary school (n=103)		Upper secondary school (n=167)	
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
English proficiency and subject matter knowledge				
1. High English language proficiency	4.08	0.84	4.21	0.94
2. Clear grammar and vocabulary explanation	4.05	0.93	4.08	1.06
3. Use authentic materials	4.22	0.88	4.28	0.83
4. Inclusion of literature and culture	3.99	0.91	3.81	1.06
5. Accurate error correction	4.30	0.78	4.29	0.89
6. Updated language knowledge	4.17	0.92	4.23	0.95
Average	4.14	0.88	4.15	0.96
Pedagogical knowledge and teaching methodologies				
7. Varied teaching methods	4.08	0.95	4.30	0.86
8. Use of CLT principles	4.29	0.82	4.36	0.83
9. Use of technology and multimedia	4.39	0.81	4.38	0.82
10. Strategy adaptation from feedback	4.16	0.87	4.20	0.92
11. Clear lesson planning	4.20	0.88	4.27	0.82
12. Interactive student activities	4.18	0.93	4.40	0.86
Average	4.22	0.88	4.32	0.85
Socio-affective skills and interpersonal relationships				
13. Positive classroom environment	4.34	0.82	4.54	0.72
14. Respectful communication	4.48	0.68	4.57	0.72
15. Support for student growth	4.30	0.78	4.28	0.85
16. Conflict resolution skills	4.30	0.83	4.31	0.82
17. Patience with learners	4.41	0.73	4.48	0.77
18. Strong student rapport	4.43	0.69	4.49	0.75
Average	4.38	0.76	4.45	0.77

Classroom management and professional conduct				
19. Balanced discipline and support	4.36	0.77	4.45	0.79
20. Fair student evaluation	4.44	0.71	4.52	0.72
21. Clear classroom expectations	4.27	0.81	4.29	0.80
22. Professional and ethical behaviour	4.42	0.69	4.52	0.73
23. Promotion of collaboration	4.38	0.76	4.46	0.79
24. Balance of control and autonomy	4.35	0.76	4.45	0.79
Average	4.37	0.75	4.45	0.77
Innovation, adaptability and professional development				
25. Ongoing professional development	4.30	0.81	4.38	0.84
26. Use of innovative methods	4.30	0.80	4.41	0.89
27. Feedback-driven improvement	4.30	0.81	4.37	0.83
28. Experiment with new technology	4.31	0.83	4.43	0.79
29. Professional community engagement	4.25	0.81	4.26	0.87
30. Adaptation to student needs	4.23	0.85	4.35	0.85
Average	4.28	0.82	4.37	0.85

For English proficiency and subject matter knowledge, both groups reported relatively high ratings (lower:  $M = 4.14$ ,  $SD = 0.88$ ; upper:  $M = 4.15$ ,  $SD = 0.96$ ). Both groups' highest mean scores were on the ability to accurately correct student errors ( $M = 4.30$ ,  $SD = 0.78$ ;  $M = 4.29$ ,  $SD = 0.80$ , respectively).

For pedagogical knowledge and teaching methodologies, ratings were also high (lower:  $M = 4.22$ ,  $SD = 0.88$ ; upper:  $M = 4.32$ ,  $SD = 0.85$ ). Upper secondary school students tended to score slightly higher across most items, with the highest rating for using interactive activities to actively engage students ( $M = 4.40$ ,  $SD = 0.86$ ). Lower secondary school students reported the highest rating for using technology and multimedia ( $M = 4.39$ ,  $SD = 0.81$ ).

In socio-affective skills and interpersonal relationships, both groups rated these skills very highly (lower:  $M = 4.38$ ,  $SD = 0.76$ ; upper:  $M = 4.45$ ,  $SD = 0.77$ ). Both groups had their high ratings on teachers' respectable and approachable communication (lower:  $M = 4.48$ ,  $SD = 0.68$ ; upper:  $M = 4.57$ ,  $SD = 0.72$ , respectively).

Regarding classroom management and professional conduct, both groups also reported high ratings (lower:  $M = 4.37$ ,  $SD = 0.75$ ; upper:  $M = 4.45$ ,  $SD = 0.77$ ). The highest mean was for fairness and consistency in evaluating student performance (lower:  $M = 4.44$ ,  $SD = 0.71$ ; upper:  $M = 4.52$ ,  $SD = 0.72$ ).

For innovation, adaptability, and professional development, both groups scored positively (lower:  $M = 4.28$ ,  $SD = 0.82$ ; upper:  $M = 4.37$ ,  $SD = 0.85$ ). For lower secondary school students, the highest rating was on teachers' experiment with new technology ( $M = 4.31$ ,  $SD = 0.83$ ), while upper secondary school students rated innovative teaching methods the highest ( $M = 4.43$ ,  $SD = 0.79$ ).

Overall, both lower and upper secondary school students reported their teachers strong competencies across all qualifications, with particularly high means in socio-affective skills and professional conduct. The standard deviations were generally low. This indicates a high level of agreement among respondents.

## **4.2 Stated Ideal English Teachers**

To explore further the ideal English teachers' characteristics and qualification, participants' writing responses in the open-ended question were explored.

In the initial analysis, 73 lower secondary school students and 129 upper secondary school students responded to the open-ended question. In the following sections, thematic analyses of both lower and upper secondary students are presented.

### **4.2.1 Lower Secondary School Students' Ideal English Teacher**

From the analysis of responses to an open-ended question from 73 lower secondary school students, the majority of participants were aged between 13 and 14 years old, with English proficiency ranging from A1 to B1, based on students' self-assessed English proficiency level from the following range: basic user, upper basic user, independent user, upper independent user, proficient user, and high proficient user. They reported two lengths of English study: 9 to 12 years and over 12 years. The following themes emerged from the data.

#### **Theme 1: The Low-Anxiety Teacher**

This cluster identifies the most frequently and urgently demanded aspects. It includes students' belief that the teacher's emotional and relational qualities are the essential building blocks for effective learning.

Students consistently prioritise teachers who are emotionally available, patient, and highly social. Students with Basic English level (A1) perceived approachability over high technical efficiency.

“I don't need a highly effective English teacher, just one who explains things simply, help me understand, and is easy to talk to.” (Age 13-14, Less than 5 years study, A1).

This statement suggests that emotional safety and basic comprehension are more important than high academic effectiveness. Additionally, the ideal teacher should actively create a low-stress environment.

“I want the atmosphere in the class to be relaxed, with a little chitchat, just playful conversation... and I want the teacher to have a smiling, cheerful face, not too stressed T-T” (Age 13-14, 9-12 years study, A1).

Student responses reveal a direct reaction against negative classroom experiences, such as classroom emotional pressure.

“My teacher must have a good balance as a teacher, not pressure students too much, and not force too much either... I don't want a teacher who has too high expectations for students, because if any student fails... the one who expects too much will complain...” (Age 13-14, 9-12 years study, A2)

An ideal teacher is not about keeping students safe. They are perceived to help students overcome their fear of making mistakes and encouraging them to use English in class.

“I want them to teach how to answer with confidence, so students answer without fear of being right or wrong.” (Age 13-14, More than 12 years study, A1).

### **Theme 2: Pedagogical Innovation**

This cluster involves the students’ perception of what and how content is delivered. It was found that activity-based, communicative language learning was preferred.

Students stated that classrooms could be enjoyable and engaging using games and activities. They advocated for classroom engagement through group-based activities.

“A teacher who often uses fun and interesting teaching methods, such as games, songs, or group activities, so that students are always involved. (Age 13-14, More than 12 years study, A1).

Students preferred real-life activity lessons. This leads to students demanding content directly relevant to their lives.

“A teacher who explains vocabulary clearly and shows how to use it in everyday situations.” (Age 13-14, 9-12 years study, A2)

This statement illustrates how students dedicate time to studying English but fail to apply their knowledge effectively. Furthermore, students prioritise sociolinguistic competence, extending beyond basic grammar.

“A teacher who teaches students to truly understand how to use [the language] such as tone, vocabulary, slang, and idioms according to the context” (Age 13-14, 9-12 years study, A2)

In addition to using real-life language, students suggested that teachers should be allowed to use translanguaging. In other words, students’ first language should be permitted for easier instruction.

“An English teacher who can speak Thai, teaches in an easy-to-understand way, and is playful” (Age 13-14, 5-8 years study, A1)

The students requested the integration of modern, interactive media to make learning relevant and enjoyable. Teachers should bring games into their lessons or use digital tools. The current teaching methods might not be up-to-date or overly dependent on old-fashioned, unchanging materials.

“A teacher can explain the content clearly, in a fun way, and make the class enjoyable. They use a variety of teaching methods, such as games, movies, or activities that allow students to practice speaking authentically. The teacher

is confident in speaking with students in English in a friendly and approachable manner.” (Age 13-14, 9-12 years study, A1)

In addition to modern media, a few students stated that they would like to learn culture through language.

“a teacher who can communicate English clearly, correctly, and easily understand... and has knowledge about native speaker culture” (Age 13-14, More than 12 years study, A1)

### **Theme 3: Instructional Clarity, Pacing, and Differentiation**

This cluster is about the means of delivery. It demonstrates the roles of comprehensible input and appropriate pacing for students’ different proficiency levels.

Students preferred teachers who could adapt lessons that are easy to understand.

“A teacher teaches easily understandable, no matter how difficult the vocabulary is.” (Age 13-14, More than 12 years study, A1).

The main challenge is not the difficulty of the linguistic concepts themselves, but rather the instructor’s ability to effectively break down complex concepts into comprehensible and manageable parts. The use of media and game helps students understand lessons.

“A teacher who uses applied teaching media, making games with paper or toys related to learning, will make children interested and understand content better than just sitting and listening or short classroom interactions.” (Age 13-14, More than 12 years study, B1)

Instructional pacing is identified as a significant source of stress, particularly for the A1/A2 students. This leads to students’ requests for patience and non-rushed teaching.

“A teacher who is ready to explain repeatedly until the learner understands.” (Age 13-14, 9-12 years study, A1)

Teachers should understand students’ pace of internalisation and comprehension. This approach, known as *Differentiated Instruction*, allows for catering to each student’s individual learning process.

“I just want them to understand that we are not good at some things they teach and keep advising us, that’s enough.” (Age 13-14, More than 12 years study, A2)

Students place high value on the ethical conduct and managerial fairness of their instructors. They connected these attributes directly to trust and reduced academic stress. The need for low or manageable homework is high.

“A teacher who assigns a reasonable amount of work—not too difficult and not too much” (Age 13-14, 9-12 years study, A1)

Students view homework as a source of unnecessary stress and pressure. Furthermore, ethical conduct is highly valued. A B1 student explicitly stated that teachers should not look down on students.

“A teacher who does not look down on students” (Age 13-14, 9-12 years study, B1)

#### **4.2.2 Upper Secondary School Students’ Ideal English Teacher**

From the analysis of 129 upper secondary school students who provided responses to the open-ended question, it was found that the majority of participants were aged between 15-16 years old, with English proficiency ranging from A1 to C1. They have studied English in two ranges: 9-12 years and more than 12 years. The following themes emerged from the data.

##### **Theme 1: The Low-Anxiety Teacher**

The most frequently mentioned theme in the student responses is about the emotional and relational qualities. Students emphasise the importance of affective qualities. They consider them essential and non-negotiable foundations for effective learning.

Caring and being kind are key qualities perceived by upper secondary school students. Students perceived that their ideal English teachers are kind and friendly as follows:

“Kind and friendly, always helping. Not violent or shouting. Tries to understand students, and takes us to do lots of activities” (15–16 years old, >12 years study, A2)

Students, especially those who are A1 learners, need their teachers to demonstrate patience, especially when they encounter learning difficulties.

“A caring teacher guides students gradually and patiently” (15–16 years old, 9–12 years study, A1)

Upper secondary school students identify punishment and judgement as significant barriers to engagement. They perceive that teachers are non-judgmental and non-aggressive.

“If a student cannot speak or do something, do not blame or shout at the child.” (15–16 years old, 9–12 years study, A1)

This phenomenon is recognised as the *high affective filter*. Before any linguistic acquisition can occur, the instructor must significantly reduce this psychological barrier. Consequently, the students perceive the teacher’s affective demeanour as a crucial prerequisite for any pedagogical application.

Beyond simply avoiding harm, the ideal teacher is expected to actively nurture confidence. The teacher is perceived as a psychological shield who motivates students to willingly contribute and celebrates effort over flawless performance.

“The teacher does not give importance to test scores as much as effort and will use that opportunity [error] to teach gently, encouraging, and emphasise that learning a language is about daring to try and then learning the correct way.” (15–16 years old, >12 years study, A1)

## **Theme 2: Pedagogical Innovation**

The second major theme concerns the quality and methodology of instruction. It was found that engaging activities and modern media are preferred over exam-oriented pedagogy.

Students prefer enjoyable activities. They seek methods that are fun, humourous, and engaging in place of classroom lectures. This preference is often tied to workload reduction.

“Teachers that give less work but more activity” (15–16 years old, 9–12 years study, B1)

“Kahoot” or similar gamified platforms suggest that students are highly motivated by accessible, digital, and interactive learning tools. Fun activities mean a strong student-led preference for experiential learning and practical application. Students demonstrated that practical usage is important for language learning. This rejects rote, grammar-translation methods.

“Lessons that do not teach repetitively, incorporating online activities (quizzes/Kahoot) to do” (15–16 years old, 9–12 years study, A2)

The current curriculum is often criticised for its perceived lack of real-world applicability. Students prefer content that is directly relevant to their lives. They reject instruction that focuses on academic assessment.

“Skills applicable outside the classroom, such as things used in daily life or general use” (15–16 years old, >12 years study, A1)

To make learning relevant and enjoyable, students request the use of diverse, modern, and cultural materials.

“The teacher should incorporate things like movies, literature, or history into the teaching” (15–16 years old, 9–12 years study, A2).

Also, teachers should incorporate modern media. Students show a need for content-based instruction, not just language. By connecting English to cultural knowledge and real-world situations, teachers can make it more valuable than just a school subject. There is an A2 student stating the need for native English speakers to serve such purposes.

“I like a native speaker to teach” (15–16 years old, >12 years study, A2)

### **Theme 3: Instructional Clarity, Pacing, and Differentiation**

This cluster is about the means of delivery. It demonstrates the roles of comprehensible input and appropriate pacing for students’ different proficiency levels.

Clear instruction and communication are preferred as a means of classroom delivery.

“A teacher who teaches clearly, communicates very well, does not teach too seriously/stressfully.” (15–16 years old, 9–12 years study, A1)

Instruction should focus on memory strategies. This indicates that students rely on cognitive strategies and require clear structure to process new information effectively.

“A teacher who explains clearly, teaches memory techniques, doesn’t scold students, doesn’t assign much homework.” (15–16 years old, 9–12 years study, A2)

Instructional pacing is a significant indicator, especially for learners with lower proficiency levels. There is a strong demand for slow, non-rushed teaching.

“A teacher who speaks clearly, teaches slowly, does not speak too fast” (15–16 years old, 9–12 years study, A2)

This suggests a need for *Differentiated Instruction*. The current one-size-fits-all teaching pace might not be effective for students who are at the A1/A2 level.

“I want them (*teachers*) to understand students who are not yet good at English because not all students are the same. Want them to understand that we also try to understand English but sometimes might be slower than friends.” (15–16 years old, >12 years study, A2)

This is fundamentally a demand for *Comprehensible Input*. When a teacher speaks too fast or uses language above the student’s current proficiency level, the linguistic input becomes incomprehensible. This might hinder the acquisition process.

Some A2 learners specify detailed scaffolding requirements. This demonstrates an awareness of their current learning gaps and reliance on meta-linguistic strategies.

“The teacher should teach us to translate word by word and combine the sentences to get the meaning.” (15–16 years old, 9–12 years study, A2).

This demonstrates that students who struggle after extended study periods require explicit, detailed structural support to overcome prior learning deficiencies. Abstract or implicit learning methods are insufficient in such cases.

#### **Theme 4: Fairness and Workload Management**

Beyond affective support and pedagogical methodology, students place a high value on the teacher’s professional ethics and management of academic workload. They link these directly to trust and stress levels.

Fairness is expected not only in interpersonal relations but also in grading practices and knowledge distribution.

“A teacher who is reasonable and fair in giving scores” (15–16 years old, 9–12 years study, A2)

“A teacher who does not show biased behaviour, or use double standards in the classroom and who dispenses knowledge equally in the classroom” (13–14 years old, 9–12 years study, B1)

Even B1 learners notice and point out unfairness in the system. This shows that biased teaching is seen as harmful to the classroom environment and the happiness of everyone learning together.

Across all proficiency levels, there are strong and frequent requests for low or no homework. Students associate high workload directly with academic stress and meaningless memorisation. They view homework as an instrument of pressure, not valuable reinforcement.

“The teacher does not assign much work, does not pressure to memorise a lot.” (15–16 years old, >12 years study, A1)

The statement demonstrates that homework could increase students’ anxiety. Students strongly advocate for limiting learning to the teacher-supported, low-stress classroom environment, which suggests a profound critique of curriculum design regarding reinforcement strategies.

Students also articulate a desire for the teacher to be a dedicated professional who actively develops their practice.

“A teacher who values the profession and the students, is dedicated, and always develops their teaching” (15–16 years old, 9–12 years study, A1)

The expectation for the teacher to be a leader also points to a need for clear, decisive, and efficient management of classroom resources and time.

#### **4.2.3 Comparison between Quantitative and Qualitative Findings**

Both lower and upper secondary school students ( $n=103$ ;  $n=167$ , respectively) reported high quantitative perceptions of their English teachers’ qualifications across all five key competency domains, namely language and content knowledge, teaching skills, socio-affective skills, classroom management, and teachers’ professional conduct. Upper secondary school students rated slightly higher mean scores than lower secondary school students. For both groups, the highest-rated category was socio-affective skills and interpersonal relationships. The lowest score was the integration of English literature and culture into lessons.

In terms of qualitative findings, both groups of participants regarded a low-anxiety teacher who shows kindness, patience, and non-judgmental practice. These affective qualities are perceived as related to the fear of making errors. Both groups disregarded passive learning, but they preferred Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) and activity-based instruction, such as games. Upper secondary school students also revealed their preferences for digital tools such as Kahoot. In addition, both groups revealed that English teachers should teach real-life content and determine differentiated pacing for A1/A2 students.

The last important theme found in the qualitative findings is that of teachers' professional conduct. Both lower and upper secondary school students stated that ideal English teachers are fair in evaluation, do not look down on students, and provide less homework. Table 2 below compares the quantitative and qualitative findings of lower and upper secondary school students.

**Table 2**

*Comparison between Lower and Upper Secondary School Students' Quantitative and Qualitative Findings*

Five Ideal Teacher Domains	Lower secondary (M1-M3)		Upper secondary (M4-M6)	
	Survey result (n=103)	Open-ended results (n=73)	Survey results (n=167)	Open-ended results (n=129)
Socio-affective skills & interpersonal relationships	Highest-rated domain ( $M = 4.38$ ); respectful/approachable communication	Kind, patient, approachable; supportive and non-judgmental classroom	Highest-rated domain ( $M = 4.45$ ); supportive relationships	Friendly and approachable; encourages students to speak confidently
Classroom management & professional conduct	Very high ( $M = 4.37$ ); fairness and appropriate conduct	Fair and respectful; does not scold; prefers manageable homework/workload	Very high ( $M = 4.45$ ); fair evaluation	Fair grading; respectful treatment; avoids blaming/ judging
Pedagogical knowledge & teaching methodologies	High ( $M = 4.22$ ); clear teaching and engaging lessons	Clear explanations; practical everyday English; memory techniques	High ( $M = 4.32$ ); interactive/ communicative learning	Communicative, activity-based learning; real-life use of English
Innovation, adaptability & professional development	Positive ( $M = 4.28$ ); technology/multimedia	Using technology/tools and making lessons modern and engaging	Positive ( $M = 4.37$ ); innovation/adaptability	Innovative activities (e.g., games/ apps) and adapting to learners
English proficiency & subject matter knowledge	High ( $M = 4.14$ ); correctness and teacher knowledge.	Clarity, correct English, and practical vocabulary use	High ( $M = 4.15$ ); accurate guidance/correction	Clarity, accurate feedback, and real-life communicative ability

### **4.3 The EFA of Lower Secondary School Students' Perceptions on Their Ideal English Teachers**

This section answers research question two regarding the latent factors underlying lower secondary school students' perceptions of ideal English teacher.

#### **4.3.1 Lower Secondary School Teachers' Characteristics**

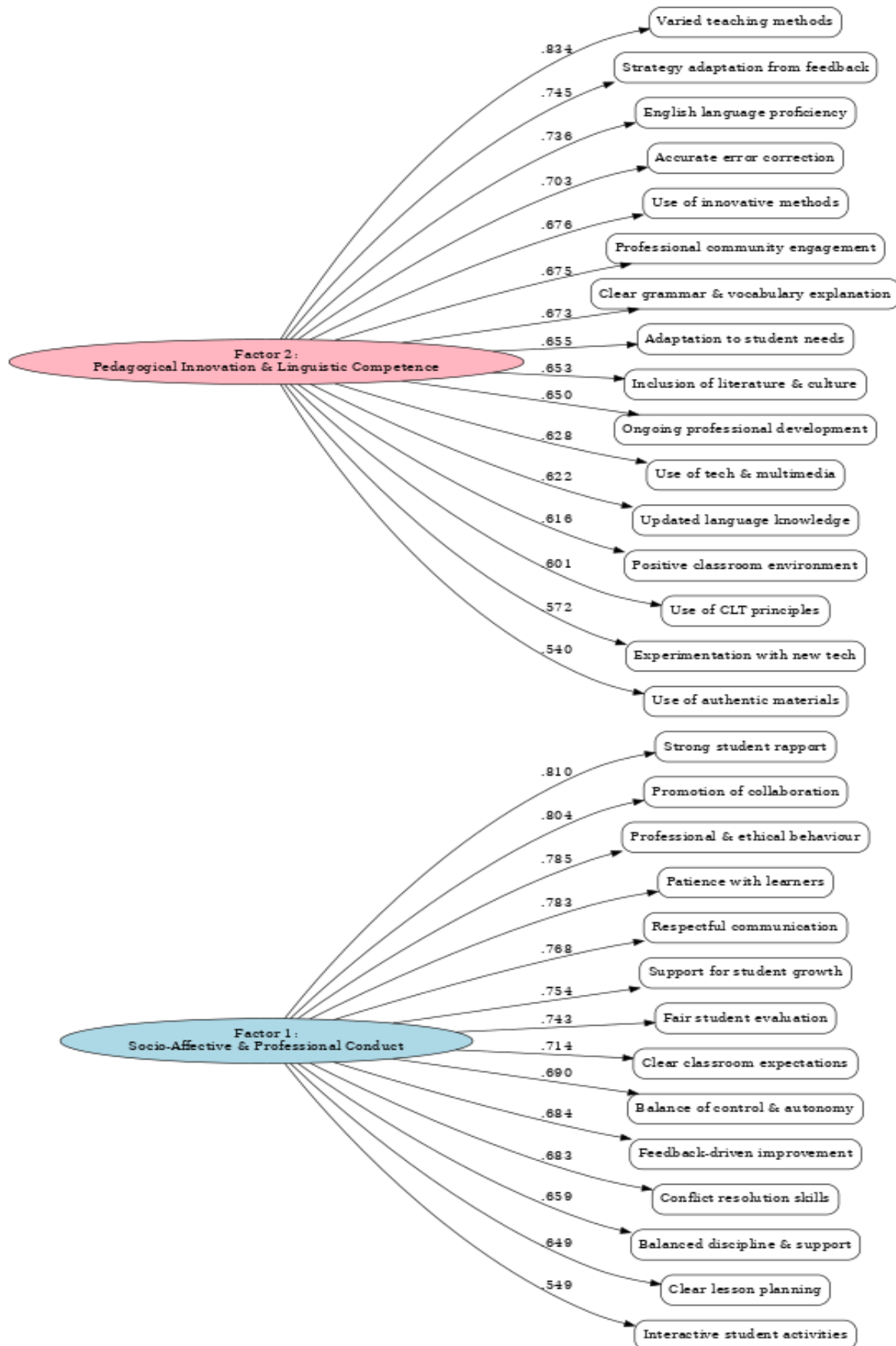
The exploratory factor analysis (EFA) conducted with the lower secondary school participants (Mathayom 1–3,  $n = 103$ ) yielded a two-factor component (see Figure 2). These factors include socio-affective and professional conduct, and pedagogical innovation and linguistic competence.

The first factor, *socio-affective and professional conduct*, accounted for 14 items relating to socio-affective qualities and classroom management skills. High-loading items (0.754 - 0.810) included socio-affective, interpersonal skills, such as strong student rapport, promotion of collaboration, professional and ethical behaviour, patience with learners, respectful communication, and support for student growth. Additional items are related to classroom professional conduct, such as fair evaluation, clear classroom expectations, conflict resolution skills, balanced discipline, and well-structured lesson planning. To conclude, these attributes mean that students value teachers who are supportive, respectful, and well-managed in learning environments.

The second factor, *pedagogical innovation and linguistic competence*, included instructional practices and content knowledge. Items loading on this factor (0.673 - 0.834) included varied teaching methods, adaptation of strategies from feedback, English language proficiency, accurate error correction, and clear grammar and vocabulary explanations. Equally important were the use of innovative methods, professional engagement, adaptation to student needs, integration of literature and culture, and the incorporation of technology and multimedia resources (loadings from 0.622 to 0.655). English teachers in lower secondary schools are perceived as those who use innovative teaching methods and have strong language skills.

Taken together, these two factors suggest that lower secondary school students perceive English teachers as those who can create rapport with them and understand their needs. They are also those who can effectively manage and balance the classroom environment and teach English with innovations. Figure 2 demonstrates the two-factor component of lower secondary school students' ideal English teachers.

**Figure 2**  
*Latent Factors of Lower Secondary School Students' Perceptions for Ideal English Teachers*



### 4.3.2 Upper Secondary School Teachers' Characteristics

The exploratory factor analysis (EFA) conducted with the upper secondary school participants (Mathayom 4–6,  $n = 164$ ) revealed a three-factor structure (see Figure 3). These three factors include socio-affective skills, teaching skills, and language competence.

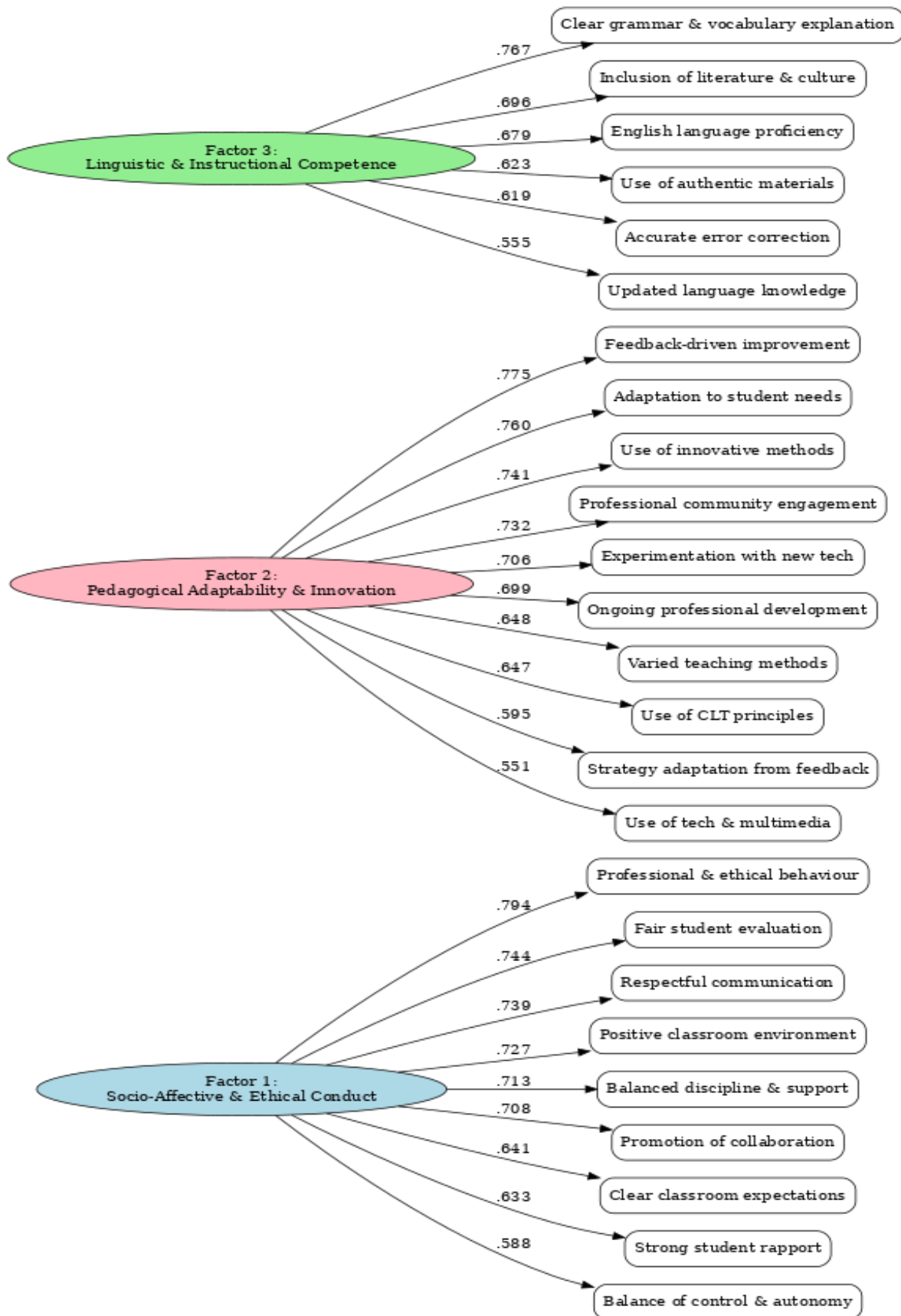
The first factor, *socio-affective and ethical conduct*, comprises 12 items with loadings ranging from 0.538 to 0.794. This dimension includes professional and ethical conduct, fair student evaluation, respectful communication, positive classroom environment, balanced discipline and support, and promotion of collaboration. Additional items such as clear expectations, strong rapport, control-autonomy balance, interactive activities, patience, and conflict resolution further reveal the importance of interpersonal trust and classroom management. These results suggest that upper secondary school students perceived fairness, respect, and professionalism as central features of effective teaching.

The second factor, *pedagogical adaptability and innovation*, reflects teachers' ability to remain responsive to student needs and professional growth, with loadings ranging from 0.551 to 0.775. These items include feedback-driven improvement, adaptation to student needs, use of innovative methods, professional community engagement, experimentation with new technology, and ongoing professional development. Supporting practices such as varied teaching methods, application of communicative language teaching (CLT), strategy adaptation from feedback, and use of multimedia technologies show how students expect teachers to integrate modern and flexible approaches into their instruction.

The third factor, *linguistic and instructional competence*, is defined by six items with loadings between 0.619 and 0.767. This factor reveals linguistic and disciplinary expertise, including clear grammar and vocabulary explanations, inclusion of literature and culture, English language proficiency, use of authentic materials, accurate error correction, and updated language knowledge.

In conclusion, upper secondary school students conceptualise ideal English teachers across three domains: socio-affective skills, innovative adaptability, and language mastery. This suggests that as students grow older, they tend to view teachers' personal skills, such as linguistic competence, as distinct qualities of an ideal English teacher. This is represented in Figure 3.

**Figure 3**  
*Latent Factors of Upper Secondary School Students' Perceptions for Ideal English Teachers*



#### 4.4 Comparison between Lower and Upper Secondary School EFAs on Ideal English Teachers

The comparison between the two EFA models shows a developmental shift in students' perceptions of ideal English teachers. Lower secondary school students focus on two broad dimensions: socio-affective qualities for a supportive learning environment and innovative pedagogical methods and language proficiency. Upper secondary school students recognise linguistic and instructional competence as separate factors. They regarded accuracy, clarity, and depth of linguistic instruction as a distinct factor. This suggests that learners' perceptions of teachers become more specialised as they mature. The EFA results revealed balanced socio-affective and pedagogical competencies with strong linguistic expertise at the upper secondary level. This is represented in Table 3 below.

**Table 3**

*Comparison of Latent Factor Structures between Lower and Upper Secondary School EFAs*

Aspect	Lower secondary (M1–M3) Two-factor EFA	Upper secondary (M4–M6) Three-factor EFA
Number of latent factors	2 factors	3 factors
Factor structure (labels)	F1: Socio-affective & professional conduct F2: Pedagogical innovation & linguistic competence	F1: Socio-affective & ethical conduct F2: Pedagogical adaptability & innovation F3: Linguistic & instructional competence
Language proficiency loads	Clusters with pedagogy/innovation (part of Factor 2)	Separate factor (Factor 3)
Overall pattern	Integrated clusters: relational–managerial vs. pedagogy + language	Differentiated clusters: relational–ethical vs. pedagogy/innovation vs. language mastery

#### 5. Discussion

Overall, the main findings of this study reveal three key areas as follows:

First, the high ratings on socio-affective skills and interpersonal relationship confirm Han (2016) and Park and Lee (2006) in that students prefer teachers who are kind and fair over pure content knowledge. In addition, this study found that students appreciate teachers who can communicate clearly, design engaging lessons, and create supportive classroom environments, similar to the results of Guspita et al. (2023) and Thamrin (2020).

In the qualitative results, ideal English teachers are low-anxiety, kind, patient, approachable, considerate, and emotionally stable. Participants reported that English teachers should avoid shouting, blaming, judging, or creating classroom pressure. This is similar to Lemana II et al. (2025), who found non-native English teachers as a comfort zone with emotional support and confidence building. Similarly, the present findings support Wangdi and

Shimray's (2022) in terms of socio-affective competence and supportive teacher-student relationships. This means that socio-affective skills are prominent in secondary school study, similar to those in the tertiary education.

Both quantitative and qualitative data demonstrate that ideal English teachers' socio-affective skills are compatible with the metaphors "candles" and "hired boats" in Noyjarean (2015) regarding teachers' nurture and guidance behaviours. At the same time, students also supported strong professional practice, such as explaining clearly, using memory-supporting techniques, and avoiding shouting, judging, or blaming. In this sense, Wongthai's (2022) metaphors of teachers as "engines" and "artisans" should not be integrated in incompatible with language proficiency and innovative pedagogy. Rather, "engines" can be embodied as teachers who drive learning forwards with energy, direction, and even effective classroom management, while "artisans" imply skilful, careful crafting of students' knowledge and abilities. These qualities reflect high language proficiency and evidence-based, learner-centred methods. Therefore, instead of a conflict between metaphors, the findings suggest a complementary expectation, in that, Thai students' ideal English teachers combine nurturing guidance with skilled, outcome-oriented professionalism, who integrate warmth and support with proficient and innovative instruction.

A second finding of ideal English teacher is on innovative, communicative, and activity-based pedagogy. The qualitative results also support this in that students preferred teachers who use games, songs, group work, movies, and digital tools such as Kahoot and Quizzes. This aligns with TESOL International Association's (2019) English teacher requirements for evidence-based, communicative, and student-centred pedagogy. Participants reporting teachers with communicative and innovative pedagogy also echo the teacher survey results of Fadel et al. (2018), in that teachers preferred communicative skills, game-based learning, creative materials development, and the use of technology. These similar findings mean that, in classroom practice, both teachers and students highly regard communicative and innovative pedagogy.

Notably, students needed practical communicative competence. They request English that can be used in daily life, in interactions with foreigners, and in contextually appropriate ways (e.g., tone, slang, and idioms). This requirement raises a question regarding exam-oriented, decontextualised instruction, as identified by Franz and Teo (2017) and Opasrattanakorn and Soontornwipast (2021). While these studies have primarily focused on identifying these issues from the perspectives of policymakers and teachers, the present study shifts the focus to students' own frustration with learning that fails to translate into functional communication despite extensive study.

The emerging support for translanguaging, i.e., students asking for teachers who can use some Thai to support understanding, reveals an important quality of English teachers. While existing literature (such as TESOL International Association, 2019; Poonpon, 2021) focuses on English-only proficiency standards and CEFR alignment, the present study suggests that lower secondary school students see strategic L1 use as part of easy-to-understand teaching. However, from the EFA analysis, when students grow older into upper secondary school, teachers' linguistic competence becomes a distinct qualification. This could be a major requirement that upper secondary school teachers should obtain as Poonpon (2021) and Franz and Teo (2017) found in their studies.

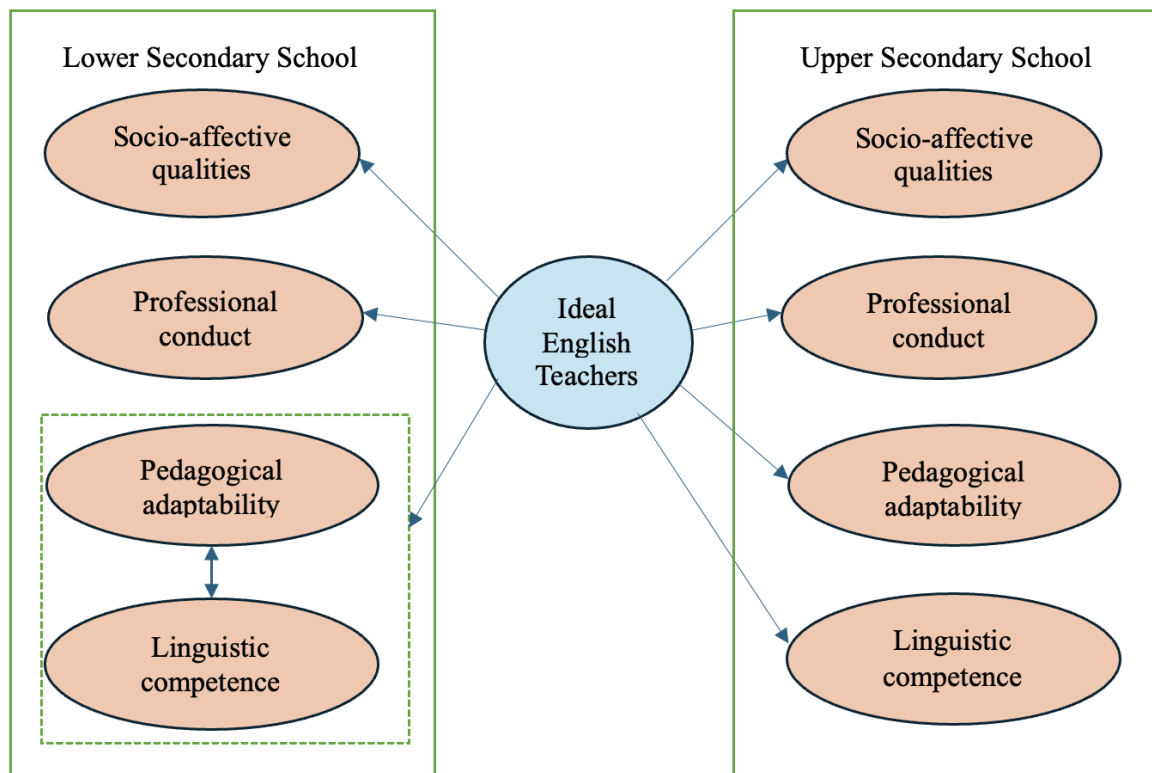
Another significant finding is clear explanation, slow and flexible pacing, and differentiated instruction. Students prefer teachers who teach slowly, explain repeatedly, and tailor instruction to those who may be slower than their peers. These findings support innovative pedagogy in Fadel et al. (2018) and Thamrin (2020). Thamrin (2020) identified weaknesses in Thai teachers' understanding of learners and lesson preparation, while Fadel et al. (2018) discovered the need for training in 21<sup>st</sup>-century classroom management and innovative strategies. The present study provides concrete student-level evidence of these gaps. Students find overly fast explanations, one-size-fits-all pacing, and heavy homework emotionally and cognitively overwhelming. This results in anxiety and silence in class.

Homework is perceived as a source of stress rather than meaningful reinforcement. This suggests that the design and purpose of out-of-class tasks may need to be re-examined to align with students' wellbeing and perceived learning value.

From the EFA results, ideal English teachers' qualifications fell into two broad factors: (1) socio-affective and professional conduct, and (2) pedagogical innovation and linguistic competence. For upper secondary school students, a three-factor structure emerged: (1) socio-affective and ethical conduct, (2) pedagogical adaptability and innovation, and (3) linguistic and instructional competence. This pattern suggests two folds. On the one hand, the common factor of socio-affective and ethical conduct in both EFAs confirms prior findings that socio-affective skills and fair professional practice are indispensable components of ideal English teachers (Cheewasukthaworn, 2025; Han, 2016; Wangdi & Shimray, 2022). On the other hand, students fail to distinguish between classroom management, socio-affective skills, and professional conduct. They also do not separate innovation and professional development from pedagogical and linguistic competence. Instead, they conceptualise ideal teaching as integrated clusters. One side focuses on relational-managerial qualities, while the other combines linguistic mastery with innovative, responsive pedagogy.

The three-factor solution for upper secondary school students further indicates a developmental differentiation. Older students, i.e. upper secondary school students, separate linguistic and instructional competence from socio-affective and adaptive pedagogical dimensions. This supports Han's (2016) suggestion that as learners progress in grade level and proficiency, their expectations become more explicit. Upper secondary school students are better equipped to differentiate between personal conduct, instructional flexibility, and language competence. It also refines the hypothesised five-domain model by showing which domains cluster together from students' perceptions and how these clusters evolve over time. This is represented in Figure 4.

**Figure 4**  
*Conceptual Diagram of “Ideal English Teachers”*



## 6. Conclusion

This study revealed that an ideal English teacher consists of socio-affective qualities, pedagogical adaptability, and linguistic competence.

These findings have significant implications in English language teaching in Thailand. Firstly, in classroom practice, English teachers should be more aware of fairness and supportive environment. English teachers should train themselves to be more supportive in terms of varying their pace, listening to students, and building students' confidence. Secondly, in professional development, ELT professional institutions should install innovative and communicative pedagogy in teachers' training. Innovative strategies, such as game-based activities, songs, and communicative strategies, such as group work, should be included in teachers' trainings. Finally, ideal English teachers' English proficiency could inform language policymakers in terms of English teachers in Thailand. In the present study, high English proficiency is a separate factor at the upper secondary school level, while lower secondary school students perceived an opportunity to use L1 to support language learning. This shifting belief supports both translanguaging in lower secondary school and English-only instruction in upper secondary school. Policymakers could use this information in their policy revisions of English language teaching in Thailand.

This study has limitations. The sample was mainly from Bangkok and nearby provinces. The results may not apply to rural or regional contexts. The use of an online questionnaire yielded mainly quantitative findings. Future research could include students' interviews or classroom observations to obtain more qualitative data. Finally, this study only focused on ideal English teachers. In future research, ideal teachers in secondary school from other subjects would help expand the findings in the present study.

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## 8. Declaration of AI Use

The authors declare that ChatGPT 5.0 was used in generating the EFA diagrams (Figures 2 and 3) for the results of the present study only. No other parts of the manuscript were generated by AI tools.

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