

INVESTIGATING THE PERCEPTION OF EFL TEACHERS IN THAILAND:  
TO WHAT EXTENT DO THEY FEEL PREPARED TO TEACH?

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Anuchidacheromoh Scholz

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The Supervisory Committee certifies that this *disquisition* complies with  
North Dakota State University's regulations and meets the accepted standards  
for the degree of

**MASTER OF SCIENCE**

SUPERVISORY COMMITTEE:

Dr. Thomas Hall

Chair

Dr. Ann Clapper

Dr. Claudette Peterson

Dr. Sangita Sinha

Approved:

6-30-2014

Date

Dr. William Martin

Department Chair

## **ABSTRACT**

This study examined how well Thai teachers of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) perceived their teacher preparation institutions trained them. The researcher focused on in-service EFL teachers who graduated from formal teacher training institutions in Thailand and were within their first three years of teaching in a primary or secondary school setting. A survey was designed to collect the data and SPSS was used for analysis. Based on descriptive statistics data, the findings indicated teacher demographics, education background and current work setting influenced their perception of preparedness. EFL teachers who felt prepared majored in English for Business Purposes, had a minor related to teaching, had a smaller class size, took subject specific courses and completed training and one year of teaching. These findings may benefit higher education leaders and educators who revise EFL teacher preparation programs, develop professional seminars for new EFL teachers, and work with Thai students.

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## **DEDICATION**

I dedicate this study to the true teachers and professors who are willing to go extra miles and tirelessly serve their students and their community. May those who are entrusting you to teach see your good works and reward you, and may those who learn from you be inspired to carry the same value and follow your footprints. All glory to God, who is timely bringing qualified advisors and supporters into my path, and who has enabled me to thankfully say “ I am finished” this research with a whole new and rich learning experience.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT.....	iii
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.....	iv
DEDICATION.....	v
LIST OF TABLES.....	ix
LIST OF FIGURES.....	x
CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION.....	1
Background of the Study.....	1
Statement of Problem.....	3
Purpose of the Study.....	4
The Significance of This Study.....	5
Definitions of Terms Used.....	5
CHAPTER 2. LITURATURE REVIEW.....	7
Section One: Context and Background.....	7
The Role of English Languages in Thailand.....	7
Teacher Preparation Requirement and Standards in Thailand.....	8
Problems of Teacher Preparation and Their Consequences.....	9
English in Formal Thai Education System.....	10

Problems of EFL Teaching and Learning in Thailand .....	10
Section Two: Previous Efforts and Ideas Proposed by the Authors .....	11
Previous Efforts .....	11
Opinions, Suggestions, Comments on Teacher Preparation.....	12
Section Three: Conceptual Framework.....	15
Culturally and Linguistically Responsive Teaching.....	15
Perception of Preparedness to Teach as it Relates to Coursework and Field Experiences ...	16
Factors that Contribute to or Influence Teachers’ Sense of Preparedness to Teach .....	17
Summary .....	19
CHAPTER 3. METHODOLOGY .....	20
Research Problem.....	20
Purpose of Study .....	21
Research Questions .....	21
Population and Sample.....	21
Instrumentation.....	22
Survey Design .....	22
Data Collection.....	24
Background and Context .....	24

Data Analysis .....	27
CHAPTER 4. RESULTS .....	31
The Study’s Response Rate.....	31
Demographic Information.....	33
Academic Background .....	34
Current Work Setting .....	34
Findings and Data Analysis .....	37
Summary .....	56
CHAPTER 5. CONCLUSION.....	57
Limitations of the Study.....	57
Summary .....	57
Conclusion.....	60
Discussion .....	61
Recommendation for Future Research.....	66
REFERENCES .....	69
APPENDIX A. SURVEY INSTRUMENT .....	74
APPENDIX B. IRB APROVAL.....	77



## LIST OF TABLES

<u>Table</u>	<u>Page</u>
1. Demographic Information.....	35
2. Academic Background.....	36
3. Current Work Setting.....	37
4. Overall Feeling of Preparedness-By Demographics.....	40
5. Overall Feeling of Preparedness-By Academic Background .....	43
6. Overall Preparedness-University Minor .....	44
7. Overall Feeling of Preparedness-By Current Work Setting .....	46
8. Five Factors that Contribute to or Influence a Teacher’s Sense of Preparedness to Teacher-Gender .....	48
9. Five Factors that Contribute to or Influence a Teacher’s Sense of Preparedness to Teach-Race and Cultural Upbringing.....	50
10. Overall Preparedness-Male and Female .....	51
11. Overall Preparedness-Course Work Taken.....	53
12. Overall Feeling of Preparedness-By Academic Background .....	55

## LIST OF FIGURES

<u>Figure</u>	<u>Page</u>
1. Survey Distribution and Response Rate .....	33

## CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION

### Background of the Study

Well trained students will become like their teachers (Luke: 6:40, New Living Translation). As an educational leader interested in the issues of teacher quality, this subject is of interest because there are shared concerns among researchers about the quality of EFL teachers in Thailand. For example, Wongsothorn, Hiranburana, and Chinnawongs (2002), Thai researchers who conducted their study on English language teaching in Thailand, revealed that there were problems in implementing the new English Language Teaching initiative because there were “inadequate supplies of trained teachers in language” (p. 114). Similarly, Hayes (2010) who studied about English language learning, teaching and educational reform in rural Thailand revealed that teachers were poorly prepared and there were “shortages of appropriately qualified teachers” (p. 305). Additionally, Ingersoll, Gang, Meilu, Lai, Fujita, Kim, and Boonyananta (2007) conducted a comparative study of teacher preparation and qualifications in six nations: United States, China, Hong Kong, Japan, Korea, Singapore, and Thailand and recognized the concerns above by stating that “it is widely believed that the quality of teachers and teaching are among the most important factors shaping the learning and growth of the students” (p. 1). The researchers’ comments are consistent with each other. Therefore, the researcher can predict that if substantial numbers of under-qualified EFL teachers are permitted to teach EFL students in Thailand, educational standards will continually decline.

In spite of the issue above, novice EFL teachers in Thailand are often expected to take on numerous responsibilities and are required to do more work than they were prepared for by their teacher preparation institutions. Dickenson (2004), who trained EFL teachers to teach overseas,

supported these opinions that English teachers were viewed as “experts” in English. Thus, they were expected to go beyond having good attention and having the ability to speak and use English well. They were indeed expected to know how to organize the new program, to select appropriate teaching materials, and to teach “a range of skills and components of English to all kinds of learners” (p. 1). In addition, Anstey and Bull (2006) stated, since the world continues to evolve, with technological, social, economic changes, and globalization-such changes affect every aspect of everyone’s life, consequently, school classroom and teacher pedagogy are expected to encourage, model, and reflect these changes if they want to equip their students to be ready to cope with these new situations. To measure up to these demands, under-prepared teachers often experience many pressures and inadequately equip their students for the new challenges. Siwatu (2010) confirmed, teachers who could not stand the pressures or were unable to overcome the challenges, “most likely will leave the profession within five years” (p. 358).

Educational reform in Thailand was intended to improve the quality of EFL teachers and of English language teaching and learning (Wiriyachitra, 2004). However, the previous efforts were also a subject of criticism. For example, Hayes (2010) commented that previously, classroom teachers were rarely given a voice in the decision-making process in formal educational reform in Thailand. In addition, Hayes referred to Punthumasen, a ministry of education official for Thailand who confirmed that “despite the great effort of Thai education policy and implementation agencies, there was the continued decline in students’ performance in English at Grade 6, 9, and 12 from 2002-2004” (p. 306). It was confirmed that “the declining standards and low proficiency in English is widely represented in the literature of English language teaching-learning in Thailand” (p. 306). Ingersoll, et al. (2007) argued that “if educational reform is to succeed in solving the problem of under qualified teachers, it must

address the major source of the problem; misdiagnoses of the source of the problem can result in misguided or inadequate solutions to the problem” (p. 14).

In light of the concerns above, combined with the knowledge and understanding gained from the previous studies, as an educational leader who was once trained as an EFL teacher by a formal teacher training university in Thailand, the researcher find it is important to conduct this study that focuses on the EFL teachers who graduated from a specific formal university teacher training system. These universities that are a part of this system have a clear vision and mission to produce qualified EFL teachers for secondary school and primary school settings across Thailand.

### **Statement of Problem**

Because there is no consensus about what the major sources or causes of under-prepared EFL teachers in Thailand are, further study is needed to provide evidence of what happened to EFL teachers after leaving their teacher preparation institutions and beginning to teach. This is necessary before educational leaders make an attempt to upgrade EFL teacher quality or to implement other educational reforms. This inspired the researcher to examine the perceptions of EFL teachers in Thailand about how adequately they felt their teacher preparation education system trained them to be EFL teachers, to deal with day-to-day teaching, and to teach diverse EFL learners in different school contexts. To get the results the researcher seeks, this study will attempt to answer the following research questions:

1. What background characteristics influence the EFL teachers’ perceptions of preparedness to teach diverse EFL learners?

2. To what extent do the EFL teachers feel prepared to teach after graduating from their teacher training institutions?
3. Is there a relationship between the amount of relevant coursework taken and a teacher's sense of preparedness to teach diverse EFL learners?
4. Is there a relationship between the lengths of practice teaching that represent actual classroom experience and their sense of preparedness to teach in the two different school contexts (urban or rural areas and primary or secondary schools)?

### **Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this study was to investigate the EFL teachers' perception on how well they feel their teacher preparation institutions trained them to work as teachers of English for a primary or high school in their first three years of their teaching career. The results of the study may lead to the major sources of why EFL teachers are under-prepared. The data may lead to a better understanding of what more knowledge, skills, and experience pre-service EFL teachers need from their teacher preparation program and what beginning EFL teachers need from their employers in order to better perform their entrusted duty.

Although this study was geared to the Thai context where English is used as a foreign language, to some extent, the results of this research may be beneficial to higher education leaders in other countries who are designing, upgrading or revising EFL or ESL curricula in teacher preparation institutions, to faculty members who are planning or implementing the coursework or practice teaching experience, to professional development (PD) planners who are designing PD events that will enhance the professional practice of the novice teachers, and to

foreign educators who will work with Thai students and Thai educators in higher education settings.

### **The Significance of This Study**

The studies previously cited clearly signal that further study is required to provide evidence of what happens to EFL teachers when they begin to teach. In other words, an investigation of the EFL teachers' perception on how well they feel their educational system trained them to work as teachers of English is necessary to provide evidence of which EFL teachers are not prepared to teach, are somewhat prepared to teach, are well prepared to teach, and are very well prepared to teach. As a result, the researcher can also find out whether they are succeeding or struggling as teachers and whether what they learned from their teacher training programs was useful or not in their teaching profession.

### **Definitions of Terms Used**

- **EFL:** Dickenson (2004) defined EFL as English as Foreign Language and TEFL as Teaching English as a Foreign Language. Courses in EFL provide instruction that focuses on the needs of EFL learners or of “non-English speakers in non-English speaking countries” (p. 1). Thailand is an example of a non-English speaking country.
- **ESL:** English as a Second Language and refers to “the teaching of English as a foreign language to people who are living in a country in which English is either the first or second language” (Turnbul, Lea, Parkinson, & Phillips, 2010, p. 515).
- **Diverse learners:** Refers to groups of EFL learners of diverse race, culture, language, and learning background and needs. This also refers to groups of students who have

different abilities to learn English and who have different opportunities to use English inside and outside classrooms. In the context of this study, diverse learners are Thai-Malay, Thai-Thai, Thai-Chinese, Thai-Indian students etc.

- **Teacher perception:** Refers to the way teachers notice and understand the nature of their teaching and learning.
- **Readiness to teach:** Refers to teachers' feelings of being fully prepared to teach and to utilize the available resources, knowledge, skills, and experience to practice effectively.
- **Teacher preparation:** Includes a period of taking coursework that is related to subject-matter and pedagogical preparation--expertise in both the "*what*" and the "*how*" of teaching". It also includes "a period in the field of supervised practice or student teaching prior to employment" (Ingersoll et al., 2007, p. 9).
- **Thai-Malay** refers to Thai citizens who are racially Malay people, whereas **Thai-Thai** are both Thai by race and citizenship.



## **CHAPTER 2. LITURATURE REVIEW**

To provide sufficient background knowledge of the subject under investigation, the relevant literature review for this study is organized in three sections. The first section is about the context and background of this study as it relates to the role of English in Thailand, the role of teacher preparation institutions, and the problems of teaching and learning English in Thailand. The second section of the literature review details what previous researchers concluded as it relates to the previous efforts that have been made to improve teacher quality and what are the expected consequences if such an issue is not solved in a timely fashion. The final section of the literature review concentrates on existing studies that relate to the conceptual framework of preparedness to teach, to culturally and linguistically responsive teaching, and to factors that may contribute to or influence teachers' sense of preparedness to teach. As a result, the similarities and differences of opinions, suggestions, comments, and warnings proposed by the authors are revealed. In response, this research may help fill the gap that is found from these previous studies.

### **Section One: Context and Background**

#### **The Role of English Languages in Thailand**

Anurit, Selvarajah and Meyer (2011) revealed that historically, Thailand has never been colonized while its neighboring countries such as Cambodia and Laos to the east were ruled by the French, and Malaysia in the south and Burma in the west were ruled by the British.

Wiriyachitra (2004) asserted that, this may be one of the reasons why "Thailand has always been a country with one official language" (p. 1). As a result, almost 100 % of the 67.6 million Thais in Thailand speak its official language: Thai (Bank of Thailand, 2008). Again, Wiriyachitra

(2004) who is familiar with the nature of English teaching and learning in Thailand explained that Thailand is like other developing countries; there is a major transition in progress in terms of business, education, science, technology, and tourism. All of these demand Thais to have a high proficiency in English for communication, negotiation and execution of transactions with the participants who cannot speak Thai. Therefore, in Thailand, English is used as a foreign language which students are required to learn in schools.

### **Teacher Preparation Requirement and Standards in Thailand**

In a comparative study of teacher preparation and qualifications in six nations: United States, China, Hong Kong, Japan, Korea, Singapore, and Thailand conducted by Ingersoll et al. (2007) revealed that in Thailand, there are 56 teacher-training institutions and 40 of them are under the system of Rajabhat universities. The government teacher-training institutes are in charge of these teacher-training institutions. All student teachers in teacher education programs are required to take an entrance examination. Since 2005, all elementary and secondary schools teachers are required to obtain a teaching license and are required to complete a five year bachelor's degree in teacher education. In addition, Ingersoll et al. (2007) explained that college graduates who complete a bachelor's degree in the fields other than education must complete a one-year post-baccalaureate diploma in teacher training to obtain a teaching license. However, both the five-year undergraduate-degree and one-year post-graduate diploma program must meet the standards of professional knowledge and experience set by the Teacher's Council. The minimum is 30 credits in general education courses, 50 credits in pedagogy courses, 74 credits in subject-matter courses, and six credits of elective courses plus one year of student teaching or professional practice for the five-year bachelor's degree program. The minimum is 24 credits in

pedagogy courses plus one year of student teaching for the one-year graduate diploma program. (p. 89).

### **Problems of Teacher Preparation and Their Consequences**

Ingersoll et al. (2007) stated that “the problem of low-quality teaching can be traced to inadequate and insufficient pre-employment training” (pp. 1-2). For example, because the teacher training and preparation requirement of teacher education in higher educational institutions “lacks adequate rigor, breadth and depth, resulting in high levels of under-qualified teachers and low student performance” (p. 2). Further, student teachers have not had adequate practice teaching or “completed sufficient coursework in their major areas of concentration” (p. 14). Hayes (2010) who conducted his study from an English teacher’s perspective in Thailand supported the idea above by revealing that an EFL teacher who graduated from a teachers’ college in Thailand admitted that “the majority of teacher preparation courses were conducted in Thai and were not subject-specific” (p. 310). Also, during the practicum, the student teacher was treated as a substitute teacher and she “received little guidance from established teachers in the school” (p. 311). Furthermore, Wiriyaichitra (2004), a Thai education leader agreed with the previous researchers and Wiriyaichitra provided several points to strengthen the ideas above. For example, Wiriyaichitra stated that so far, the English curriculum and the English language teaching in Thai universities neither prepared Thais for the changing world, nor meet the demands for English used in the workplace and in the tourism industry because the language skills used most at this level are not focused on listening and speaking. Since English is considered as “important to the domain of information technology as other infrastructures” (p. 1), it is predicted that if the English teaching and learning in Thailand is not improved, “Thailand will lag behind in the competitive world of business, education, science, and technology” (p. 1).

Also, because “Thai graduates who are in the tourism industry have a poor command of English; this has contributed to misunderstanding and a negative attitude towards Thailand” (p. 1).

### **English in Formal Thai Education System**

The following studies illuminated the context of formal EFL teaching where English is taught throughout from the primary level to the university level. Punthumasen (2007) explained that in Thailand the present formal education system is divided into two levels as follow: First, the basic education system consists “of 6 years of primary education, 3 years of lower secondary education and 3 years of upper secondary education” (p. 5). Second, the higher education system consists of “lower than degree level and degree level” (p. 5). Baker (2008) further explained that Thai “National Education Curriculum implemented in 2002 placed English alongside IT [Information Technology] , at the forefront of national intellectual development” (p. 137). The English curriculum is based on “culture, communication, connection, and community” (p. 137). This curriculum is “introduced a compulsory 12 credits of English at tertiary level: 6 in general English and 6 in academic English or English for specific purposes” (p. 137). Wongsothon et al. (2002) added that English curriculum in Thailand promotes learner-centered methods and supports continuous lifelong learning that allow learners of English to further “acquire knowledge in their fields of interest so as to satisfy their needs-whether [they] be personal, academic or occupational” (p. 111).

### **Problems of EFL Teaching and Learning in Thailand**

The following studies revealed the nature of EFL classroom and the conditions under which formal EFL teaching and learning takes place. To begin, Wiriyachitra (2004) who conducted a study touching on the problems of English language teaching in Thailand revealed

that teachers in the primary and secondary school face many challenges and difficulties. For example, they had heavy teaching loads and there were too many students in a class since there were generally 45 to 60 students. Further, the English teachers had insufficient English language skills and had insufficient knowledge of native speaker culture. Besides, they inadequately equipped classrooms with educational technology. As a result, their students received unchallenging English lessons. Along the same line, Punthumasen (2007) justified poor progress by saying that “Thai students have little opportunity to practice English on a daily basis” (p. 3). This may be one of the reasons “why most Thai students do not have a high level of English competency despite learning English for 9-12 years in basic education as well as at the university level” (p. 3).

## **Section Two: Previous Efforts and Ideas Proposed by the Authors**

### **Previous Efforts**

Significant efforts have been made to upgrade the quality of EFL teachers in Thailand. For example, Punthumasen (2007) who conducted her study touching on an approach to tackling problems of English education in Thailand reported that, “international programs in university and other higher education institutions in Thailand have been increasing in order to meet the needs of students in the age of globalization” (p. 1 ). Further, Wiriyaichitra (2004) who studied what has been planned or already done to improve the English language teaching and learning situation in Thailand also confirmed that the Thai government encouraged establishing more new international programs in English. As a result, there were at least 143 undergraduate international programs in governmental higher education institutions. These programs “have been established either independently by Thai institutes or have links with overseas institutes (p. 2). In addition,

university students who take English as a major are required to “take at least four compulsory English courses” (p. 4). The author went on to explain that “foundation courses 1 and 2 are integrated language skills and study skills courses; the others may be English for Academic Purposes (EAP) or English for Specific Purposes (ESP) courses as required by each major. Further, before graduation, university students are required to take a National English Proficiency Test and the test results can be used “for employment applications and for further education in Thailand” (p. 4). In many schools and universities, Self-Access Learning Centers (SALC) are established to facilitate learners’ independence. Finally, English Language Teaching (ELT) websites in Thailand are also available for Internet users for improving their English and “the English language proficiency of Thais will be evaluated with National Standardized Tests to assure the quality of English language teaching and learning” (p. 5).

To some extent, Hayes (2010), Punthumasen (2007) and Wiriyachitra (2004) agreed that many efforts have been made by the Thai government to improve teacher quality and the quality of English teaching and learning. However, weakness still persists in previous efforts as Hayes (2010) commented that “the programmes to improve English language teaching (ELT) in Thailand usually prioritize classroom methods and materials, but being a full-time teacher in any institution entails accepting a range of duties beyond that of teaching itself” (p. 315). This shows that the teacher training program “fails to take into account of the needs teachers themselves define” (p. 315).

### **Opinions, Suggestions, Comments on Teacher Preparation**

There has been considerable research over the years concerning teacher preparation. Keintz (2011) confirmed that "no curriculum reform succeeds if teachers do not have the knowledge of

content and strategy to teach well" (p. 6). While Ingersoll et al. (2007) suggested ways to upgrade teacher quality by making "the entry and training requirements for teaching more restrictive, deeper and more rigorous" (p. 2). Gimbert, Bol and Wallace (2007) who wrote about the influence of teacher preparation on student achievement in an urban secondary school context recommended that "teachers needed extensive training in order to develop deeper knowledge of subject matter and the ability to teach the subject matter to a diverse student population" (pp. 92-93). Darling-Hammond, Chung, and Frelow (2002) supported the idea above when they agreed that teacher preparation could be strengthened by providing more intensive coursework on subject matter, content pedagogy, and strategies for teaching diverse learners as well as providing "more systematic and connected clinical experiences" (p. 287). Also, the authors tend to agree with many universities that "developed 5-year models that include a disciplinary major and intensive training for teaching, including a year long student teaching experience" (p. 287). However, Gimbert et al. (2007) reminded that "extensive teacher training in a 4 or 5 year program does not guarantee an effective teacher" (p. 93). Casey and Gable (2011) suggested that teacher preparation should be "grounded in knowledge of child and adolescent development, learning, social contexts, and subject matter pedagogy, taught in the context of practice" (p. 24). Also, it is important that "student teachers are given experiences to teach in varied settings with cooperating teachers who model differentiated instruction" (p. 26). This can be done by demonstrating "how to differentiate through the use of a range of technology tools" (p. 26). However, Hayes (2010) tended to promote Thai teachers of English using "the language for their own communication purposes in their own ways rather than conformity to native speaker norms" (p. 316). Similarly, Baker (2008) encouraged ESL teachers to learn how to use English as a medium of intercultural communication in Asia. This will enable

them “to adapt themselves to the intercultural communicative needs of local contexts” (p. 144). The American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education Serving Learners (2009) remarked that well-prepared teachers should have strong general intelligence, strong verbal ability and strong content knowledge. This will enable teachers to organize and explain ideas and observe and think diagnostically. In addition, well-prepared teachers should have strong knowledge of how to strategically teach diverse learners in their content areas. Well-prepared teachers should have an understanding of their learners development; they should know how to assess and assist students with learning differences; they also should know “how to support the learning of language and content for those not yet proficient in the language of instruction” (p. 1). Such knowledge and skills will allow teachers to make sound judgments about what should be done in a given context in response to their students' needs. It was confirmed that “well-prepared teachers have positive impacts on the achievement of their students, on their own confidence from a sense of preparedness for teaching, and on their staying behavior-their retention in the field of teaching” (p. 1). For the field experience, the educational organization team who summarized the findings of what researchers said about teacher preparation (The Education Commission of the States, 2003) revealed that the “high-quality field experiences are identified as follows: strong supervision by well-trained teachers and university faculty and prospective teachers’ solid grasp of subject matter and basic understanding of pedagogy prior to student teaching” (p. 3). For the coursework preparation that would enable teachers to teach English with high-quality instruction, Dickenson (2004) who prepared English teachers for English-teaching ministry overseas listed that teacher-preparation elements for beginning teachers need to include:

- (1) an overview of TESL/EEFL techniques and procedures, including an introduction to teaching content areas such as grammar, vocabulary, pronunciation, and the listening-



speaking and reading-writing skills; (2) the evaluation, selection, and adaptation of teaching material; and (3) supervised practice teaching. (p. 4)

Brown (2004) who shared about language assessment principles and classroom practice commented that, teachers need to understand “three basic interrelated concepts of: testing, assessment, and teaching” (p. 3). Brown (2001) added, “language teachers must be technicians, well versed in the pedagogical options available to meet the needs of the various ages, purposes, proficiency levels, skills, and contexts of language learners around the globe” (p. xi). Davies and Pears (2000) concluded that successful English teachers tend to focus their teaching on student’s needs and they tend to use English for real communicative activity in every class.

### **Section Three: Conceptual Framework**

#### **Culturally and Linguistically Responsive Teaching**

Casey and Gable (2011) revealed that “the needs and benefits for teachers to differentiate instruction are high” (p. 2). However, many teacher education programs seldom give student teachers an opportunity to learn how to differentiate instruction to meet the needs of academic and culturally diverse learners. This shows that assessing levels of teacher preparedness for implemented instruction strategies to deal with diverse learners is needed. Siwatu (2010) who conducted her study touching on teacher preparation for diverse classrooms shared that “teacher education programs whose mission is to prepare teachers for diverse classrooms employ various methods to assist prospective teachers in developing the aforementioned knowledge and skills reflective of culturally responsive teachers” (p. 358). Such methods enabled prospective teachers “to grasp the practical aspects of teaching in a classroom consisting of students from diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds” (p. 358). To illustrate, the researcher shared that culturally

responsive teachers regularly use “students’ cultural knowledge, experiences, prior knowledge, and individual learning preferences as a conduit to facilitate the teaching and learning process” (p. 358). Also, they not only used a variety of assessment techniques, but also “provided students with the knowledge and skills needed to function in mainstream culture while simultaneously helping students to maintain their cultural identity, native language, and connection to their culture” (p.358). Finally, the researcher concluded that as teachers infuse students’ culture in the teaching and learning process, students’ academic achievement is increased. Therefore, Siwatu (2010) who conducted a study touching on pre-service teachers’ preparedness to teach in American’s urban and suburban schools suggested that teacher education programs should identify “ways to prepare prospective teachers for the unique challenges that each context may present” (p. 364). It is equally important to support “novice teachers as they attempt to overcome context-specific challenges” (p. 364).

### **Perception of Preparedness to Teach as it Relates to Coursework and Field Experiences**

Boyd, Grossman, Lankford, Loeb, and Wyckoff (2009) who conducted a study about teacher preparation and student achievement found that student teachers who received more coursework and practice on what they will be doing during the first year as a teacher tend to feel more ready to teach in the first year of their teaching career. Siwatu (2010) warned that without appropriate training preparing teachers to be ready to teach students with diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds, new teachers may feel ill prepared to cope and manage daily challenges in schools. Darling-Hammond et al. (2002) revealed that “many teachers do not feel that their programs adequately prepared them from certain teaching tasks, such as using technology and teaching English language learners” (p. 297).

## **Factors that Contribute to or Influence Teachers' Sense of Preparedness to Teach**

Many researchers suggested that there are many factors that may influence the degree of teachers' sense of preparedness to teach. Darling-Hammond et al. (2002) who conducted a study called "Variation in Teaching Preparation: How Well Do Different Path Ways Prepare Teachers to Teach" confirmed that "teachers' perceptions may depend on both individual differences and contextual differences" such as "the kind of school where a teacher begins teaching" (p.293). The researchers went on to explain that "teachers' practice and views are affected by other professional development the longer they are in the profession" (p. 289). The authors felt that "analyses of program effects would be best examined within 3 years of entry" (p. 258). In this study, the authors, utilized a set of 40 survey questions that related to teaching professional knowledge and skills which could be grouped into five factors as a way to capture teacher's sense of preparedness to (1) Promote Student Learning, (2) Teach Critical Thinking and Social Development, (3) Use Technology, (4) Understand Learners, (5) Develop Instructional Leadership and plus their overall preparedness. The teachers were asked to rate their sense of preparedness using a Likert scale (poorly prepared, adequately prepared, and well prepared). The authors found that teachers who were prepared in formal teacher education programs felt significantly better prepared across five factors than those who had no teacher training or without preparation. The authors stated that the results of perceptions of teachers' sense preparedness may or may not reflect their actual teaching effectiveness. However, such findings gave significant evidence that "Teachers who felt better prepared were significantly more likely ( $p < .001$ ) to believe they could reach all of their students, handle problems in the classroom, teach all students to high levels, and make a difference in the lives of students" (p. 294). Hayes (2010) encouraged "acknowledging the significance of the socioeducational context of English language

teaching as a major influence on the classroom teaching-learning process” (p. 306). Schreiner (2010) found, “younger teachers who were between 22-25 years of age felt that they had more adequate training in how to teach students from different cultural backgrounds” (p. 1). Siwatu (2010) found that “new teachers who are placed in urban schools with a set of challenges different from what they witnessed during their field experiences are quick to realize that they are completely unprepared to teach in an urban school setting” (p. 359). Boyd et al. (2009) suggested that “whether we want to include teacher characteristics or not, depends on our research question” (p. 421). Keintz (2011) pointed out that the inputs of teacher backgrounds may be used to evaluate “as positive or negative influences on preparedness to teach” (p. 17). Kee (2012) who conducted a study touching on the feeling of preparedness to teach among alternative certified teachers found that first year teachers who participated in a yearlong practicum felt more prepared to teach compared to the ones who did not. On the other hand, “1<sup>st</sup> year teachers who have limited types of coursework in pedagogy do not feel that they have received high quality preparation” (p. 25). Kee found, “the person, the program, and the school contribute to the teacher’s sense of preparedness during the first year of teaching” (p. 25). Therefore, Kee pointed out that it is necessary “to ask whether program features play a role in determining feeling of preparedness” among the teachers (p. 23). In addition, Catherin and Childs, (2011) suggested asking whether teachers were prepared to execute the teaching task within the particular context such as an urban or a suburban school. Again, Kee (2012) reminded that it is important that teacher preparations “include topics on instructional methods, learning theory, developmental psychology, and adapting curriculum for diverse learners: in their course learning” (p. 25). For future researchers on teacher preparation, they need to explore how the quality and delivery of coursework and field experiences affect teacher outcomes. They should

conduct “a more in-depth analysis of personal background and school context that could enhance their understanding of the factors that mediate program effects on teacher outcomes” (p. 35). Equally important, future researchers should “determine how teacher educators can design programs that offer sufficient preparation so that the novice teachers will feel well prepared to teach at the schools where they are needed most” (p. 36). In her study, Kee (2012) used the survey questions that related to handling classroom management or discipline; using instructional methods; teaching subject matter; assessing students; selecting and adapting curricular material; and using of educational technology as predictors for the outcome “prepared”.

## **Summary**

Based on this literature review, it is clear that previous efforts made to improve the quality of EFL teachers, teaching and learning English in Thailand have dealt mainly with educational reform at the national level and weakness still persists in the educational reform because the teachers’ voice was somewhat excluded in the decision making process. This suggests that further research is important to assess the level of teacher preparedness to find out which novice teachers are succeeding as English teachers, which are struggling, and what training was useful or not. The results that derive from this study may serve to inform teacher preparation programs and educational leaders on how to best meet the needs of EFL teachers. The data may inform educational leaders of effective pedagogical practice for successfully preparing English teachers. This will be one way to reveal the teachers’ voice that needs to be heard by educational leaders. As a result, educational leaders could take informed action to respond to teachers’ needs first before making an attempt to improve EFL teacher quality at any stage during teacher preparations.

## CHAPTER 3. METHODOLOGY

Sections contained in this chapter are as follows: research problem, purpose of the study, research questions, population and sample, instrumentation, survey design, data collection, and data analysis.

### **Research Problem**

The country of Thailand has one official language, Thai. However, as with many of the world's developing countries, Thailand in recent decades has begun to embrace English as preferred language in the areas of business, education, science, technology and tourism. All of these areas demand that Thai people have a high proficiency in English for communication, negotiation, and execution of transactions with the participants who cannot speak Thai. Therefore, in Thailand, English is used as a foreign language which students are required to learn in schools.

Recent research in Thailand (Ingersoll, et al. 2007; Hays, 2010; Wongsatorn, Hiranburana, & Chinnawong, 2002) has indicated that there may be problems with EFL teacher preparation. This is evidenced by one Thai education ministry official's statement that "despite the great effort of Thai education policy and implementation agencies, there was the continued declined in students' performance in English at Grade 6, 9, and 12 from 2002-2004" (Hays, 2010).

## **Purpose of Study**

The purpose of this study was to investigate the EFL teachers' perception on how well they feel their teacher preparation institutions trained them to work as teachers of English for a primary or high school in their first three years of their teaching career.

## **Research Questions**

To get the results the researcher seeks, this study will attempt to answer the following research questions:

1. What background characteristics influence the EFL teachers' perceptions of preparedness to teach diverse EFL learners?
2. To what extent do the EFL teachers feel prepared to teach after graduating from their teacher training institutions?
3. Is there a relationship between the amount of relevant coursework taken and a teacher's sense of preparedness to teach diverse EFL learners?
4. Is there a relationship between the lengths of practice teaching that represent actual classroom experience and their sense of preparedness to teach in the two different school contexts (urban or rural areas and primary or secondary schools)?

## **Population and Sample**

The target population of this study was English as Foreign Language elementary and secondary teachers serving full-time in either urban or rural areas of Thailand. Further, teachers qualifying for this study had three years or less teaching experience, and graduated from teacher

training institutions in Thailand which share the same system, vision, and mission to train and produce qualified EFL teachers for high school and primary school settings across Thailand. The underlying reasons to limit the respondents to teachers with three or fewer years of teaching experience was that in general after three years, teachers may be provided with opportunities to attend professional development seminars, and this may influence the way they answer the survey questions.

The researcher targeted a sample size of 100 participants for this study. There were a total of 115 surveys distributed via e-mail attachment to educational leaders and EFL teachers and 82 surveys were returned of which only 18 were usable for this study because they meet the 3 criteria.

### **Instrumentation**

The questionnaire was originally developed in English and later translated and conducted in Thai language. The results were compiled and translated back to English. The questionnaire consisted of three parts plus a consent form. (a) The first part included questions 1 to 14 and asked about the participants' background; (b) the second part included questions 15-54 which consisted of professional knowledge and skills questions and (c) the third part included question 55 and consisted of an open-ended question.

### **Survey Design**

The three sections of the survey instrument helped the researcher identify particular information useful in participant differentiation, (a) questions 1-4-demographics, (b) questions 5-9 academic background, (c) questions 10-14 current work setting. Survey instrument questions 15-54 make up a fourth section. These questions (15-54) were taken directly (with the



permission from the author) from the work of Darling-Hammond (2002) on the five factors that contribute to a teacher's sense of preparedness to teach. These factors are: Promote Student Learning (survey questions 15-24, 30, 39, 42, 43), Teaching Critical Thinking and Social Development (survey questions 31-38), Understanding Learners (survey questions 25-29, 40, 41), Developing Instructional Leadership (survey questions 44-48), Using Technology (survey questions 49-53).

Finally, a culminating question (survey questions 54) asked participants overall assessment of their EFL teacher preparation training. The stem for each question in the series was "When you first started teaching, how well prepared did you feel you were to..." Participants were asked to score their responses: 1 (Not at all Prepared), 2 (Somewhat Prepared), 3 (Well Prepared), or 4 (Very Well Prepared). The survey was previously used by the New York City Board of Education where there were a total of 2,956 usable surveys returned. These factors give the researcher a sense of confidence that the questions from the Darling-Hammond study were valid and reliable. With permission from Darling-Hammond, the survey questionnaire was chosen because the questions clearly address the research's questions under study; they capture important aspects of the link between teacher preparation and practice in Thailand; and they reflect the overall ideas suggested by previous studies, in particular the studies by Ingersoll et al. (2007), Punthumasen (2007), Wongsathon, Hiranburana, and Chinanawongs (2002) cited in the literature review. The participants used a Likert scale from 1 to 4 to rate their sense of preparedness to teach. To illustrate, a score of 1 representing "not at all prepared", a score of 2 representing "somewhat prepared", a score of 3 representing "well prepared.", and a score of 4 representing "very well prepared."

Survey question 55 is the open-ended question- “Are there any other comments you would care to make concerning your university preparation as an EFL teachers? If so, please feel free to add them here”. This question was asked to give the participant an opportunity to recall their teacher training experience prior to giving meaningful suggestions or constructive feedback that was not covered by the previous questions in detail. The answers were analyzed, categorized, culturally interpreted, translated and summarized into a theme.

## **Data Collection**

### **Background and Context**

The most challenging part was getting contact information for teachers who fit the criteria (“sample”). The researcher began this identification process by compiling a list of all eligible schools and their contact information and by calling former colleagues and their supervisors in Thailand. This already was a challenge as the phone connection for intercontinental calls were often interrupted or lacked of clear talking or listening. The time difference (12-13 hours) also created a problem for the researcher. It was difficult to ask former colleagues to help in finding participant sample-contact information as they already are overloaded with work.

The next step was organizing a trip to Thailand (from April 16<sup>th</sup>-May 17<sup>th</sup>). With no funding, the researcher needed to choose the least expensive airline ticket. As it turned out, the time traveling to Thailand overlapped with the time of Thai public school holidays. In addition, at this time the researcher was not able to conduct the survey, because she learned while traveling in Thailand that she first had to be trained in Institution Review Board for a research that involve human subjects (IRB Certification). On the other hand, this allowed the researcher to

work on the best possible translation since the survey was written and analyzed in English (as the agreed research language) but conducted in Thai language.

The researcher traveled to the southernmost provinces in Thailand by train, bus, and share taxi and within cities and rural area used a motorcycle to search for participants. Those three provinces were under a special curfew.

The researcher contacted educational leaders of those eligible schools to find out whether their schools had potential participants that fit the criteria for this study or not. If there were some qualified participants, the researcher asked permission from the educational leaders to get the contact information (e.g. telephone and e-mail) of potential volunteers. To illustrate, to find study participants two different strategies were employed. The first and most time consuming method was to visit open schools and visit with the principal and EFL department head to identify names of teachers who would fit the criteria and directly talk to them and ask for participation as well as their contact information (e-mail and phone number). Those contacts proved to be the most successful in regards to selection (criteria), participation and response. The researcher visited almost all private high schools in those three provinces that were not on summer break. The second strategy was getting access to a larger members of teacher but with less response or valid (the criteria fitting) teacher. Here the researcher visited numerous district administration offices and contacted the EFL administrator as well as the English teacher club coordinators. Because of safety reasons, in some districts, the researcher could not access the potential participants directly. This strategy proved to be less successful since administrators did not have up-to-date contact information such as e-mail addresses, correct phone numbers (cell phone numbers were changing faster than land line numbers, and there were not many land line phones in countries like Thailand) or only phone numbers of principals or the school instead of

phone numbers of the possible participants. In addition, most of the returned surveys did not conform with the criteria the research study required and were thus unusable.

When the researcher returned to North Dakota and completed IRB training, there were three attempts made to collect data. The surveys were sent through e-mail directly to teachers that the researcher made contact with, to principals of schools to be forwarded to teachers in their schools, to EFL head teachers of schools to be forwarded to teachers who would fit the given criteria, to school district administrators for EFL who also forwarded the survey to teachers who would fit the criteria and to the district English teacher club leaders to be forwarded to teachers who would fit the criteria.

The first surveys were sent out July 9, 2013 by e-mail to the identified and selected EFL teachers in Thailand. The participants received an e-mail of the questionnaire in a Thai translation along with a letter stating the survey is completely voluntary and their identities would remain confidential in Thai language. Once the participants received the survey, they were asked to complete and return it within one week and were followed up by phone calls and e-mail messages weekly or bi-weekly to encourage participants to fill out the questionnaire. The researcher also asked the participants who sent completed surveys if they could contact their colleagues and friends who teach EFL in different schools, and then the researcher contacted them to participate as well (snowball sampling). The first attempt ended around November 2013. Due to lack of responses the researcher attempted a second trial by contacting the participants who returned the survey and by asking them to help look for other EFL teachers who either graduated with them or were in a similar position. At the same time the researcher continued following up on the samples and the department heads and principals who agreed on helping to connect with potential participants. Most administrators confirmed that they had encouraged and

reminded potential participants and could not explain why there was little response. This second round continued through February 2014. In this phase the researcher received a lot of data, but unfortunately the overwhelming majority did not meet all three criteria. Since the researcher did not get the expected sample size, a third attempt was tried. While analyzing the data, the researcher contacted her previous professor to make connections with current fifth year students (last year of teacher education and practicing teacher). That professor gave only contact to one student who was not able to help. From start to finish data collection and analysis took approximately 10 months.

### **Data Analysis**

In order to analyze the results, all the survey questions needed to be answered. The SPSS was used to organize and analyze the collected data. Since the researcher did not have a large enough number of participants to run t-tests and correlation, descriptive statistics are used to report the study's findings to the following questions:

To answer research question 1: "What background characteristics influence the EFL teachers' perceptions of preparedness to teach diverse EFL learners?" Teacher demographics are considered as categories of independent variables. A perception of preparedness is considered as a continuous dependent variable. Each variable for survey questions 1 to 6 were coded for analysis. For example, the response for survey question#1, "What is your gender?" females were coded as 1 and males as 2 to distinguish between the two genders. For each variable for research questions 7 to 14, the researcher assigned values to those answers such as for survey question# 8 "During your university studies, did you complete at least one year of practice teaching?" In this

case, the teacher who completed 1 year of practice teaching was coded as 1 and those with no training was coded as 0.

Survey questions 15-54 participants were rated relative to their perception of preparedness from 1(Not at all Prepared) to 4 (Very Well Prepared). Because the researcher did not have a large enough number of participants to run t-tests to help identify how teacher background influenced the teacher's perception of preparedness to teach, descriptive statistics were used to answerer this research question.

For research question 2, "To what extent do the EFL teachers feel prepared to teach after graduating from their teacher training institutions?" There is only one variable, "EFL teachers feel prepared". In order to answer this question, survey questions 15-54 were categorized into five factors that contribute to or influence a teacher's sense of preparedness to teach. These factors are: Promote Student Learning (survey questions 15-24, 30, 39, 42, 43), Teaching Critical Thinking and Social Development (survey questions 31-38), Understanding Learners (survey questions 25-29, 40, 41), Developing Instructional Leadership (survey questions 44-48), Using Technology (survey questions 49-53). Finally, a culminating question (survey questions 54) asked participants overall assessment of their EFL teacher preparation training. The stem for each question in the series was "When you first started teaching, how well prepared did you feel you were to..." Participants were asked to score their responses: 1 (Not at all Prepared), 2 (Somewhat Prepared), 3 (Well Prepared), or 4 (Very Well Prepared).

There is only one variable, "EFL teachers feel prepared" for this question. Therefore, the researcher needed to find the total numbers and percentages to the responses well prepared and very well prepared to answer this question. This enabled the researcher to find out how prepared

particular groups of participants (e.g. male or female; Thai-Thai or Thai-Malay) felt they were to teach.

For research question 3, “Is there a relationship between the amount of relevant coursework taken and a teacher’s sense of preparedness to teach diverse EFL learners?” The researcher was looking for a relationship between the amount of relevant coursework taken and a teacher’s sense of preparedness. Again, the researcher did not have a large enough number of participants (only 18 usable surveys) to run a correlation to answer whether these two variables, the amount of relevant coursework taken and a teacher’s sense of preparedness, were correlated or not. Therefore, the researcher used descriptive statistics in reporting the findings of this question. In SPSS, the researcher used demographic survey questions 7a-d which dealt with coursework. To review: survey question 7a asked about selecting and adapting instructional material; survey question 7b asked about learning theory; survey question 7c asked about developmental psychology; and survey question 7d asked about teaching methods. The researcher assigned values to those answers as “yes” and “no”. The researcher assigned code 1 for yes and 0 for no. In this case, the very well prepared teacher received a maximum of 4 and the teacher feeling unprepared a minimum of 0.

For research question 4, “Is there a relationship between the length of practice teaching that represents actual classroom experience and their sense of preparedness to teach in the two different school contexts?” The researcher was looking for a relationship between the length of practice teaching and their sense of preparedness. Therefore; the researcher focused on the following survey questions 11, 12, and 13. For survey question 11, “During your university studies, did you complete at least one year of practice teaching?”, if so, the researcher assigned

code1, if no the researcher assigned 0. For survey question 12 “At what level did you do your practice teaching?”, and survey question 13 “At what level do you currently teach?” the researcher coded one, if the answers matched. The researcher coded zero if the answers are discordant. In this case, the very well prepared teacher (one year of practice teaching and training matching with school level placement) is assigned a maximum of 2 points and the least prepared teacher a minimum of 0 point. Since the researcher did not have a large enough number of participants to utilize correlation (only 18 usable surveys), the researcher used descriptive statistics in reporting the findings of this question.

Survey question 55, was open-ended, “Are there any other comments you would care to make concerning your university preparation as an EFL teacher? If so, please feel free to add them here”. This question was asked to give the participant an opportunity to recall their teacher training experience prior to giving meaningful suggestions and constructive feedback in detail. The answerers were analyzed, categorized, culturally interpreted, translated and summarized into a theme.



## CHAPTER 4. RESULTS

The purpose of this study was to examine the perceptions of Thai teachers of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) about how well they felt their teacher preparation institutions trained them to be EFL teachers, to deal with day-to-day teaching, and to teach diverse EFL learners in different school contexts. The focus of this chapter will be on the study's results. The chapter is divided into three major sections. The first two sections will deal with the study response rate and teacher demographics, while the third will report on the findings and data analysis for each research question. Descriptive statistics will be used throughout.

### **The Study's Response Rate**

There were a total of 115 surveys distributed via e-mail attachment to educational leaders and EFL teachers. Of the 115 distributed surveys 82 (71.30%) surveys were returned. All completed surveys were returned to the researcher in electronic form via e-mail attachment. All responses were categorized into two sets: set one complied with the following criteria (a) in-service EFL teachers who graduated from formal teacher training institutions under the same system in Thailand and (b) those that are teaching in a primary or secondary school setting, and (c) those that are within their first three years of teaching. Set two did not comply with the given criteria. All surveys and responses were entered manually into SPSS software. Of the 82 completed and returned surveys only 18 (21.95%) met the needed criteria and thus were considered usable for analysis. The 64 (78.05%) returned surveys that did not meet the criteria for this study can be distributed into these three categories: (a) respondents did not major in English; (b) respondents have been teaching more than three years since graduating; (c) respondents graduated from universities outside of the one the researcher wanted to concentrate

on in her study, a university with a clear vision and mission to produce qualified EFL teachers for high school and primary school settings across Thailand.

Of the 18 respondents who contributed usable surveys, the researcher personally met or connected with 16 (88.89%). Only five (27.78%) EFL teachers out of 18 contributed to open-ended survey question 55, which asked “Are there any other comments you would care to make concerning your university preparation as an EFL teacher? If so, please feel free to add them here”. The following flowchart displays the response rate for this study.

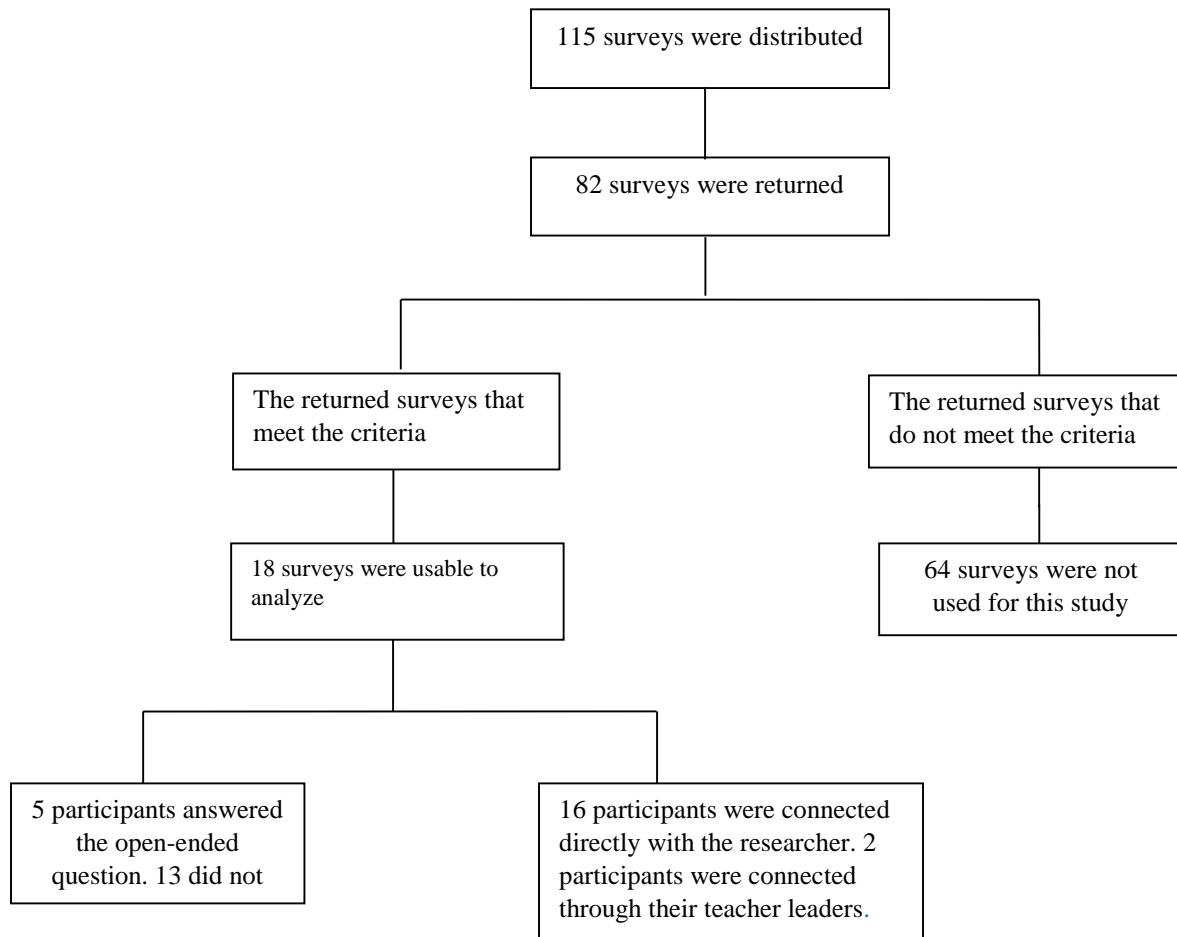


Figure 1. Survey distribution and response rate.

### Demographic Information

In the first section of the survey, the participants answered survey questions 1 to 14 which provided demographic, academic background, and current work setting information.

The following demographic information was gathered from the participants of the study from their answers to survey questions number 1-4 and is included in Table 1: Gender, Race and Cultural Upbringing, Age, and teacher training programs they graduated from.

## **Academic Background**

The next set of survey questions sought to determine respondent's university major (survey question 5) and minor (survey question 6) subjects studied, relevant coursework taken (survey question 7a-7d), if they spent at least one year practice teaching (survey question 8), and the level of their practice teaching-primary or secondary (survey question 9) The Academic Background was gathered from the participants of the study and are included in Table 2.

## **Current Work Setting**

Survey questions 10-14 asked respondents about their current work setting; what level (primary or secondary) they currently teach (survey question 10), length of time they have been teaching (survey question 11), do they teach in an urban or rural area of Thailand (survey question 12), the approximate number of students in their classroom (survey question 13), and have they taken part in professional development programs since being licensed as a teacher (survey question 14). The current work setting information was gathered from the participants of the study and is included in Table 3.

Table 1

*Demographic Information*

Variables	Categories	Number	Percentage
Gender	Female	15	83%
	Male	3	17%
	Total	18	100%
Race and Cultural Upbringing	Thai-Malay	13	72%
	Thai-Thai	5	28%
	Total	18	100%
Age	Less than 26	5	28%
	Between 26-35	6	33%
	Between 36-45	5	28%
	More than 45	1	6%
	Did not Report	1	6%
	Total	18	100%
Graduated From	Teacher Training Number 1	10	56%
	Teacher Training Number 2	4	22%
	Teacher Training Number 3	1	6%
	Teacher Training Number 4	1	6%
	Teacher Training Number 5	1	6%
	Teacher Training Number 6	1	6%
	Total	18	100%

Note: any percentage category that does not equal 100% is due to rounding

Table 2

*Academic Background*

Variables	Categories	Number	Percentage
Major	English for Teacher Education	16	88%
	English for Business Purposes	2	12%
	Total	18	100%
Minor	No Minor Taken	13	72%
	Minor Taken	4	21%
	Did not Report	1	6%
	Total	18	100%
Three or More Courses in Selecting and Adapting Instructional Material Taken	Yes	14	79%
	No	4	21%
	Total	18	100%
Three or More Courses in Learning Theories Taken	Yes	15	83%
	No	3	17%
	Total	18	100%
Three or More Courses in Developmental Psychology Taken	Yes	16	89%
	No	2	11%
	Total	18	100%
Three or More Courses in Teaching Methods Taken	Yes	17	94%
	No	1	6%
	Total	18	100%
Completed at Least One Year of Practice Teaching	Yes	14	79%
	No	4	21%
	Total	18	100%
Practice Teaching Level	Primary School	7	39%
	Secondary School	6	33%
	Both	3	17%
	Did not Practice Teaching	2	11%
	Total	18	100%

Note: any percentage category that does not equal 100% is due to rounding

Table 3

*Current Work Setting*

Variables	Categories	Number	Percentage
Current Teaching Level	Secondary	11	61%
	Primary	7	39%
	Total	18	100%
Length of Time They have been Teaching	Less Than 1 Year	5	28%
	Between 1-2 Years	9	50%
	More than 2 Years and less than 3 Years	4	22%
	Total	18	100%
Current Teaching Area	Urban	12	67%
	Rural	6	33%
	Total	18	100%
Approximately Number of Students in Class	Between 13-34 Students	8	44%
	Between 45-46 Students	9	50%
	More than 46 Students	1	6%
	Total	18	100%
Received Professional Development	Yes	13	72%
	No	5	28%
	Total	18	100%

Note: any percentage category that does not equal 100% is due to rounding

**Findings and Data Analysis**

The purpose of this study was to find out how well prepared Thai teachers felt their teacher training program prepared them for their life as a teacher of English as a Foreign Language (EFL). To help uncover this; a series of survey questions, taken directly from the work of Darling-Hammond et al. (2002), were asked (survey questions 15-54). The questions were designed to characterize five factors that contribute to or influence a teacher's sense of

preparedness to teach. These factors are: Promote Student Learning (survey questions 15-24, 30, 39, 42, 43), Teaching Critical Thinking and Social Development (survey questions 31-38), Understanding Learners (survey questions 25-29, 40, 41), Developing Instructional Leadership (survey questions 44-48), Using Technology (survey questions 49-53). Finally, a culminating question (survey question 54) asked participants overall assessment of their EFL teacher preparation training. The stem for each question in the series was “When you first started teaching, how well prepared did you feel you were to...” Participants were asked to score their responses: 1 (Not at all Prepared), 2 (Somewhat Prepared), 3 (Well Prepared), or 4 (Very Well Prepared).

This study was guided by four research questions. In this section, each of the four research questions will be restated along with corresponding findings and data analysis.

Research question 1 “What background characteristics influence the EFL teachers’ perceptions of preparedness to teach diverse EFL learners?”

In attempt to answer this research question, teacher demographics, academic background, and current work setting are served as collective predictors for the outcome “preparedness”. For survey questions 1-14 each variable was coded and assigned values for analysis. For example, in the SPSS data view, the response for survey question 1, “What is your gender?” females were coded as 1 and males coded as 2 to distinguish between the two genders. However, for each variable for research questions 7a-7d, the researcher assigned values to those answers as “Yes” (coded as 1) and “No” (coded as 0). For the response for survey question 8 “During your university studies, did you complete at least one year of practice teaching?” In this case, the



teacher who completed 1 year of practice teaching received a maximum of 1 point and those with no training received the minimum of 0 points.

Tables 4, 5, and 6 attempt to answer the question of participants overall feeling of preparedness by listing participant responses to question # 54 of the survey instrument used in the study which asked: Over all, how well prepared did you feel you were when you first started teaching?. We will review participant responses through the lens of the demographic, academic background, and current work setting variables listed in the previous tables. Tables 4, 5, and 6 detail the variables, categories, number and percentage of survey participants who responded Well Prepared or Very Well Prepared to this question.

With only 18 responders, the researcher did not have a large enough number of participants to run t-tests to help identify how teacher background influenced the teacher's perception of preparedness to teach. Therefore, the researcher utilized descriptive statistics (number and percentage) to answer research question number 1.

Based on the findings, the participants came from six different formal teacher training programs. Out of 18 participants, there were 15 female and three male participants. A higher percentage of male teachers (100%) reported that they felt prepared in teaching compared to female teachers (60%). There were 13 Thai-Malay and five Thai-Thai. As compared to Thai-Malay (54%), a higher percentage of Thai-Thai EFL teachers (100%) felt more prepared in teaching. The majority of EFL teachers in this study were female (83%) and were Thai Malay (72%).

The participating EFL teachers' age ranged from 23 to over 45 years and averaged 31 years old. Refer to Table 4; the participants whose age was between 26 and 45 reported that they

felt well or very well prepared to teach. This research indicates that the older teachers whose age was between 26 to 45 tend to feel better prepared to teach (83-100%) compared to younger teachers whose age was less than 26 years old (40%) or to those whose age was more than 45 years old.

Table 4

*Overall Feeling of Preparedness-By Demographics*

Variables	Categories	Number	Well prepared or Very Well Prepared	
			Number	Percentage
Gender	Female	15	9	60%
	Male	3	3	100%
	Total	18		
Race	Thai-Malay	13	7	54%
	Thai-Thai	5	5	100%
	Total	18		
Current Age	Less than 26	5	2	40%
	Between 26-35	6	5	83%
	Between 36-45	5	5	100%
	More than 45	1	0	0%
	Did not Report	1	0	0%
	Total	18		

The following findings about the perception of EFL teachers divided by their academic background: university major and minor, relevant courses taken, and practice teaching experience were gathered and are included in Tables 5 and 6.

Out of 18 participants, there were 16 (88%) who majored in English for English Teacher Education of which 14 did formal practice teaching. There were two participants (12%) who majored in English for Business Purposes who did no formal practice teaching. Two out of 18 participants reported that they had no field experience (known as practice teaching) prior to teaching English and were hired to become English teachers. Surprisingly, the two participants who graduated with an English major for Business Purposes with no training felt more prepared (100%) to teach compared to EFL teachers who graduated with an English major for English Teacher Education with formal practice teaching (63%).

Three out of the four participants (75%) with a minor that related to teacher education felt well or very well prepared to teach. Out of 18 participants, there were 13 who had no minor and one who did not report. Interestingly, nine of those who report no minor felt well or very well prepared (69%) to teach.

There was little difference in feeling well or very well prepared between those who took three or more courses in Selecting and Adapting Instructional Material compared to those who did not take the courses, (64%) verses (75%). Those who took three or more courses in Learning Theories felt more prepared (60%) compared to those who do not (33%). Those who took three or more courses in Developmental Psychology (69 %) felt better prepared compared to those who did not (50%). Sixty-five percent of those who took three or more courses in Teaching Methods felt well or very well prepared to teach.

Based on one year completion of practice teaching and their current teaching, there were 14 participants who completed at least one year of practice teaching; there were 4 participants

who reported that they did not complete one year of teaching practice. Surprisingly, there was little difference between these two groups (64% versus 75%).

In analyzing the data for the level of student teaching practice, three out of 18 participants had training to teach both primary and secondary schools. Two of three or 67% of those felt well or very well prepared to teach. All of these three are currently teaching in secondary schools.

There were 13 out of 18 participants who had training for only either primary or secondary school; there was little difference between these two groups (57% versus 66 %.). Only 10 out of the 16 who had training felt well or very well prepared. There were two participants with no practice teaching experience, of these one of the two is currently teaching in a secondary school and the second is currently teaching in a primary school. Interestingly, the two with no training felt well or very well prepared (100%).

Based on the participant's university minor, there were four out of 18 participants reporting their major in English with a minor (Library Science, Thai, Music, Technology for Education). Table 6 details the preparedness levels of those reporting a minor.

Table 5

*Overall Feeling of Preparedness-By Academic Background*

Variables	Categories	n	Well Prepared or Very Well Prepared	
			Number	Percentage
Major	English for English Teacher Education	16	10	63%
	English for Business Purposes	2	2	100%
Minor	No Minor Taken	13	9	69%
	Minor Reported	4	3	75%
	Did not Report	1	0	0%
Three or More Courses in Selecting And Adapting Instructional Material Taken	Yes	14	9	64%
	No	4	3	75%
Three or More Courses in Learning Theories Taken	Yes	15	9	60%
	No	3	1	33%
Three or More Courses in Developmental Psychology Taken	Yes	16	11	69%
	No	2	1	50%
Three or More Courses in Teaching Methods Taken	Yes	17	11	65%
	No	1	0	0%
Completed at least One Year of Practice Teaching	Yes	14	9	64%
	No	4	3	75%
Practice Teaching Level	Primary	7	4	57%
	Secondary	6	4	67%
	Both	3	2	67%
	Did not Practice Teaching	2	2	100%

Table 6

*Overall Preparedness-University Minor*

Variables	Categories	Well prepared or Very Well Prepared		
		n	Number	Percentage
Minor	Librarian	1	0	0%
	Music	1	1	100%
	Thai	1	1	100%
	Technology for Education	1	1	100%

The following findings about the perception of EFL teachers divided by current work setting was gathered and is included in Table 7.

Concerning the level of current teaching assignment, seven were teaching in a primary school, and six (86%) felt well or very well prepared. Of 11 teaching at a secondary school, six (55%) felt well or very well prepared. Those teaching in a primary school may be better prepared for teaching with the current university teacher preparation program.

Based on the findings of the length of their teaching, those who taught between one and two years felt well prepared, or very well prepared (78%) to teach. Sixty percent of the participants who taught less than one year felt well or very well prepared to teach, and 50% of the participants who taught between two and three years reported that they felt either well or very well prepared to teach. This study indicates that those who taught between one and two years felt better prepared than those who taught less than one year or who taught between two and three

years. This study suggests that these two groups might need professional development or mentoring that will help them to be better prepared.

Based on current teaching and the school location, there were six out of 18 teachers who teach in a rural area and 12 teachers who teach in an urban area. Eighty three percent of those who teach in a rural area felt well or very well prepared compared to those who teach in an urban area (58%).

Concerning the approximate number of student in class, the class size ranged from 13 to 47, and averaged 32. The participants who had class size between 26 to 36 students felt well or very well prepared to teach (80%) compared to those who had class size between 15-25 students (60%) or compared to those who had class size between 37-47 students (57%).

Concerning the participants who received professional development, nine out of 13 participants felt well or very well prepared to teach (69%). There were 3 out of five participants who did not received professional development who felt well or very well prepared (60%) to teach. As noted in Table 7, there is little difference between those who received professional development and those who did not (69% versus 60%).

Table 7

*Overall Feeling of Preparedness-By Current Work Setting*

Variables	Categories	Well prepared or Very Well Prepared		
		n	Number	Percentage
Current Teaching Level	Primary	7	6	86%
	Secondary	11	6	55%
	Total	18		
Length of Time Teaching	Less than 1 Year	5	3	60%
	Between 1-2 Years	9	7	78%
	More than 2 Years	4	2	50%
	Total	18		
Current Teaching Area	Urban	12	7	58%
	Rural	6	5	83%
Approximately Number of Students in Class	Between 15-25	5	3	60%
	Between 26-36	5	4	80%
	Between 37-47	7	4	57%
	More than 47	1	1	100%
	Total	18		
Received Professional Development	Yes	13	9	69%
	No	5	3	60%
	Total	18		

Research question number 2 asked: “To what extent do the EFL teachers feel prepared to teach after graduating from their teacher training institution?” This section will detail results of the survey questions which focused on Darling-Hammond’s et al. (2002) five factors that contribute to or influence a teacher’s sense of preparedness to teach. These factors are: Promote Student Learning (survey questions 15-24, 30, 39, 42, 43), Teaching Critical Thinking and Social



Development (survey questions 31-38), Understanding Learners (survey questions 25-29, 40, 41), Developing Instructional Leadership (survey questions 44-48), Using Technology (survey questions 49-53). Finally, a culminating question (survey questions 54) asked participants overall assessment of their EFL teacher preparation training. The stem for each question in the series was “When you first started teaching, how well prepared did you feel you were to...”

Participants were asked to score their responses: 1 (Not at all Prepared), 2 (Somewhat Prepared), 3 (Well Prepared), or 4 (Very Well Prepared).

The following findings, detailed in Table 8, about the perception of EFL teacher preparedness were divided by the five factors using participant gender. Based on the findings for factor one (Promote Student Learning), females reported that they felt well or very well prepared to teach (93%) than males (67%). Based on the findings for factor two (Teaching Critical Thinking and Social Development), females reported that they felt well or very well prepared to teach (93%), for males (100%). Based on the findings for factor three (Understand Learners), females reported that they felt well or very well prepared to teach (73%), for males (100%). Based on the findings for factor four (Developing Instructional Leadership), females reported that they felt well or very well prepared to teach (93%), for males (100%). Based on the findings for factor five, (Using Technology), females reported that they felt well or very well prepared to teach (79%) for males (100%).

Table 8 outlines the five factors using participant gender as the lens to view perceived preparedness.

Table 8

*Five Factors that Contribute to or Influence a Teacher's Sense of Preparedness to Teach-Gender*

Variables	Categories	Well Prepared or Very Well Prepared		
		n	Number	Percentage
Promote Student Learning	Female	15	14	93%
	Male	3	2	67%
Teach Critical Thinking and Social Development	Female	14	13	93%
	Male	3	3	100%
	Did not report	1	0	0%
Understanding Learners	Female	15	11	73%
	Male	3	3	100%
Developing Instructional Leadership	Female	14	13	93%
	Male	3	3	100%
Using Technology	Female	14	11	79%
	Male	3	3	100%

Table 9 details the five factors that contribute to or influence a teacher's sense of preparedness to teach by race and culture upbringing.

Based on the findings for factor one ( Promote Student Learning), 100% of Thai-Malay participants reported that they felt well or very well prepared, while 80% of the Thai-Thai participants felt well or very well prepared to teach. Based on the findings for factor two (Teaching Critical Thinking and Social Development), Thai-Malay perception of preparedness is 85%, for Thai-Thai it is 100%. Based on the findings for factor three (Understand Learners). Seventy seven percent of the Thai-Malay participants reported that they felt well or very well

prepared, whereas Thai-Thai perception preparedness is 80%. Based on the findings for factor four (Developing Instructional Leadership), Thai-Malay participants reported their perception of preparedness at 85%. For Thai-Thai participants it was 100%. Based on the findings for factor five ( Using Technology), 69% of Thai-Malay participants verses 100% of Thai-Thai participants reported that they felt well or very well prepared to teach in this area.

Table 9 outlines the five factors using participant race and cultural upbringing as the lens to view perceived preparedness.

Table 9

*Five Factors that Contribute to or Influence a Teacher's Sense of Preparedness to Teach-Race and Cultural Upbringing*

Variables	Categories	n	Well Prepared or Very Well Prepared	
			Number	Percentage
Promote Student Learning	Thai-Malay	13	13	100%
	Thai-Thai	5	4	80%
Teach Critical Thinking and Social Development	Thai-Malay	13	11	85%
	Thai-Thai	5	5	100%
Understanding Learners	Thai-Malay	13	10	77%
	Thai-Thai	5	4	80%
Developing Instructional Leadership	Thai-Malay	13	11	85%
	Thai-Thai	5	5	100%
Using Technology	Thai-Malay	13	9	69%
	Thai-Thai	5	5	100%

The following findings are about overall feeling of preparedness of all EFL teachers- male and female. Overall, 67% of participants, male and female reported that they felt well or very well prepared to teach. Table 10 outlines the overall perception of preparedness of all EFL teachers involved in this study.

Table 10

*Overall Preparedness-Male and Female*

Variables	Categories	Well Prepared or Very Well Prepared		
		n	Number	Percentage
EFL Teachers	Male and Female	18	12	67%

Research question number 3 asked: Is there a relationship between the amount of relevant coursework taken and a teacher’s sense of preparedness to teach diverse EFL learners?

The following findings about the perception of EFL teachers based on the amount of relevant coursework taken and a teacher’s sense of preparedness to teach were gathered and is included in Table 11. The researcher was looking for a relationship between the amount of relevant coursework taken and a teacher’s sense of preparedness. However, the researcher did not have a large enough number of participants (n=18) to run a correlation test to answer whether these two variables, the amount of relevant coursework taken and a teacher’s sense of preparedness, were correlated or not. Therefore, the researcher could not discuss possible “relationships”. Instead, the researcher used descriptive statistics in reporting the findings of this research question. In SPSS data view, the researcher used survey questions 7a-7d which dealt with coursework taken. To review: survey question 7a asked if participants took three or more courses in Selecting and Adapting Instructional Material; survey question 7b asked if participants took three or more courses in Learning Theory; survey question 7c asked if participants took three or more courses in Developmental Psychology; and survey question 7d asked if participants took three or more

courses in Teaching Methods. The researcher assigned values to those answers as “yes” and “no”. The researcher assigned code 1 for yes and 0 for no. In this case, the very well prepared teacher will get a maximum of 4 points and the least prepared teacher a minimum of 0 points.

Based on the findings and detailed in Table 11, those who took three or more courses in Selecting and Adapting Instructional Material felt less prepared to teach when compared to those who did not 64% versus 75%. Those who took three or more courses in Learning Theories felt well or very well prepared (60%) compared to those who did not (33%). Those who took three or more courses in Developmental Psychology felt well or very well prepared (69%) as compared to those who did not (50%). Sixty five percent of those who took three or more courses in Teaching Methods felt well or very well prepared to teach. In short, those who took three or more courses in Selecting and Adapting Instructional Material, Learning Theories, Developmental Psychology, and Teaching Methods reported their perception of preparedness to teach between 60-69%. Based on this data, it is unclear if a relationship exists between academic course work taken and EFL teacher’s perception of preparedness to teach.

Table 11

*Overall Preparedness-Course Work Taken*

Variables	Categories	Well Prepared or Very Well Prepared		
		n	Number	Percentage
Three or More Courses in Selecting And Adapting Instructional Material Taken	Yes	14	9	64%
	No	4	3	75%
Three or More Courses in Learning Theories Taken	Yes	15	9	60%
	No	3	1	33%
Three or More Courses in Developmental Psychology Taken	Yes	16	11	69%
	No	2	1	50%
Three or More Courses in Teaching Methods Taken	Yes	17	11	65%
	No	1	0	0%

Research question number 4 asked: Is there a relationship between the lengths of practice teaching that represent actual classroom experience and their sense of preparedness to teach in the two different school contexts (urban or rural areas and primary or secondary schools)?

The following findings pertain to the perception of EFL teacher preparedness based on their length and level of practice teaching in the two different school contexts, primary or secondary. To answer this research question, the researcher focused on survey questions 11, 12, and 13. For survey question 11, “During your university studies, did you complete at least one year of practice teaching?”, if so, the researcher assigned a code of 1, if no, the researcher assigned a code of 0. For survey question 12 “At what level did you do your practice teaching?” and survey question 13 “At what level do you currently teach?” the researcher assigned a code of 1, if the answers matched. The researcher assigned a code of zero if the answers are discordant. In this case, when a teacher’s practice teaching level matched their current placement the teacher was assigned 2 points. Zero points were assigned if this was not the case. Since the researcher did not have a large enough number of participants (n=18) to utilize correlation, the researcher used descriptive statistics in reporting the findings of this research question.

Table 12 details that out of 18 participants, there were 14 participants who reported that they completed at least one year of practice teaching. There were nine out of the 14 who felt well or very well prepared to teach. Contrarily, those who did not complete at least one year of practice teaching felt more prepared to teach (75%) when compared to those who completed at least one year of practice teaching (64%). Of the four participants who did not have one year of teacher practice training, two had no training at all, and two had less than one year.

Based on their matched training and teaching, seven out of 18 (39%) EFL teachers had training that matched their current teaching position. There were 11 EFL teachers out of 18 (61%) who had training that did not match their current teaching position. Surprisingly, those who had training that matched their current teaching position felt less prepared (57%) than those who had training that did not match (73%) their current teaching position. This does not seem as



a strong factor for teacher preparation. This could be the matter of the person or the sample. In short, based on this data, there is no strong connection between those who complete one year training and those who do not and between those who matched training and teaching with those who do not.

Relative to school area setting, 58% of EFL teachers who teach in urban areas felt well or very well prepared compared to 83% of those who teach in rural areas.

Table 12

*Overall Feeling of Preparedness-By Academic Background*

Variables	Categories	n	Well Prepared or Very Well Prepared	
			Number	Percentage
Complete at least One Year of Practice Teaching	Yes	14	9	64%
	No	4	3	75%
Trained and Teach Primary School, or Secondary School	Not matched	11	8	73%
	Matched	7	4	57%
Level of Student Practice Teaching	Primary School	7	4	57%
	Secondary School	6	4	67%
	Both	3	2	67%
Level of Current Teaching	Primary School	7	6	86%
	Secondary School	11	6	55%
School Area	Urban	12	7	58%
	Rural	6	5	83%

In the third part of the survey questions, the participants were asked to respond to the open-ended question (# 55): “Are there any other comments you would care to make concerning your university participation as an EFL teachers? If so, please feel free to add them here.”

The answers from survey question 55 were culturally analyzed, interpreted, and translated. Three themes emerged after compiling and analyzing the data set. Only five EFL teachers out of 18 contributed. These five EFL teachers wish there were:

1. More courses that related to technology for teaching offered during their training.
2. More native English speakers as English instructors so the instructor would speak English in class with their student teachers.
3. More instructors who are friendly and understand student teachers’ needs and interests and who are able to provide activities to generate a more interesting classroom experience.

## **Summary**

All surveys were categorized and recorded. The recordings were filed in the SPSS software. Confidentiality was ensured by the researcher to assure the participants identity was kept private. Once the final research report is written, the original or raw data will be destroyed. After considering descriptive statistics to answer all four research questions, the findings indicate that teacher backgrounds to some extent influenced EFL teacher perception of preparedness to teach. Chapter 5 will share summary, conclusions, discussion, and recommendations for future research.

## CHAPTER 5. CONCLUSION

This chapter will provide a summary of the study, conclusions drawn by the researcher through analysis of the data collected, discussion of the results of the study, and recommendations for further study.

### **Limitations of the Study**

This study had several limitations. First, with limited time, budget, and access to the pool of EFL teachers, this study was accomplished through a survey and it was solely based on teacher self-reporting instead of interviewing or observing the teaching in actual classrooms. Therefore, the responses may or may not reflect an individual's competence.

Small sample size was another limitation. From 82 voluntary returned surveys, only 18 returned surveys met the required criteria for this study. The participants came from three provinces in the southern part of Thailand, are graduated from six universities within the same system, and were not randomly selected. The sample might also contain response bias; consequently the data may have been skewed. For these reasons, the results from this study may not reflect the quality or represent the entire range of teachers who graduated from all Thai teacher training programs. Any generalization of the results of this study should be approached cautiously.

### **Summary**

There were 115 surveys distributed, 82 surveys were returned, and 18 out of 82 returned surveys were considered as usable data. SPSS was used to organize and analyze the data. The data used to answer research question#1 (What background characteristics influence the EFL

teachers' perceptions of preparedness to teach diverse EFL learners?) presents the following findings: (1) in this study the majority of EFL teachers that responded were female and Thai-Malay, (2) Thai-Thai EFL teachers felt more prepared than their Thai Malay counterparts, (3) male teachers felt more prepared than female EFL teachers, (4) the average EFL teachers was 31 years old. (5) Those whose age was between 26 and 45 years felt more prepared to teach than those who were less than 26 and more than 45 years old. (6) The average class size was 32 students. Those with a class size between 26-36 students felt better prepared than those who had a class size between 15-25 or between 37-47 students. (7) The average of the length of teaching is 16 months. Those who had been teaching between 1 and 2 years felt more prepared than those who taught less than 1 year or more than 2 years. (8) Having a minor in a subject related to teaching did not increase preparedness. (9) English for Teacher Education was not better than English for Business in preparing EFL teachers. (10) Assigning an EFL teacher to the same grade level as their practice teaching did not effect the level of preparedness. (11) EFL teachers who teach in a rural area felt better prepared than urban teachers. (12) EFL teachers who completed one year of practice teaching and received professional development did not increase preparedness.

The data used to answer research question # 2 (To what extent do the EFL teachers feel prepared to teach after graduating from their teacher training institutions?) presents the following findings:

Overall, 67% of participants felt well or very well prepared to teach. Males felt better prepared to teach critical thinking and social development, to use technology, to understand learners, and to develop instructional leadership. Females felt better prepared to promote student learning. Thai-Thai teachers felt better prepared to teach critical thinking and social

development, to use technology, to understand learners, and to develop instructional leadership. Thai-Malay teachers felt better prepared to promote student learning.

The data used to answer research question # 3 (Is there a relationship between the amount of relevant coursework taken and a teacher's sense of preparedness to teach diverse EFL learners?) presents the following findings:

Due to the fact that the overall sample size was small (n=18) and no correlation test could be run, it is unclear from the results obtained that taking three or more classes of specific course work (Selecting and Adapting Instructional Material, Learning Theories, Developmental Psychology, Teaching Methods) contributed to teacher sense of preparedness to teach diverse EFL learners. However, it is interesting that almost two thirds (average=65%) of those who took these classes reported that they were well or very well prepared as reported in Table 11.

The data used to answer research question # 4 (Is there relationship between the lengths and level of practice teaching and their sense of preparedness to teach in the two different school contexts-urban or rural areas and primary or secondary schools?) presents the following findings:

Due to the fact that the overall sample size was small (n=18) and no correlation test could be run, it is unclear from the results obtained how much impact having one year of practice teaching or the location of current employment (urban or rural) contributed to EFL teacher's sense of preparedness. However, it is interesting to note that the majority of participants, as reported in Table 12, felt well or very well prepared.

Of the five EFL teachers out of 18 who contributed to the open-ended question (#55). The EFL teachers wish there were: more courses that related to technology for teaching offered during their training; more native English speakers as English instructors so the instructor would

speak English in class with their student teachers; and more instructors who are friendly and understand student teachers' needs and interests and who are able to provide activities to generate a more interesting classroom experience. One interesting and unexpected finding was that two teachers with no formal training in English language teaching were hired as English teachers.

## **Conclusion**

Although 67% of the surveys participants indicated that they felt they were well or very well prepared to teach, the way they felt about their teaching ability had small to no relation to teaching preparation course work or professional development and teaching field experience. These findings to some extent contradict descriptions of well-prepared teachers that reported in previous studies. For example, Casey and Gable (2011) suggested that a teacher should be “grounded in knowledge of child and adolescent development, learning, social contexts, and subject matter pedagogy, taught in the context of practice” (p. 24). Also, it is important that “student teachers are given experiences to teach in varied settings with cooperating teachers who model differentiated instruction” (p. 26). In this case, some EFL teachers had no training, no minor that related to teaching, no major in English for teacher education and no year of practice teaching. Their perception of their preparedness to teach may or may not reflect their actual ability to teach. They may or may not know that they are not well prepared. They might respond to the survey differently if they would be exposed to different qualities of teacher training. Therefore, the way they answered the survey may not reflect their real ability to teach. English for Business purposes seemed to prepare the teacher better. However, with only two respondents with this background it is difficult to say categorically. This may be because they are more exposed to English speakers in ways that is more relevant to everyday life and they are more

outgoing. That may boost their confidence about themselves or their ability; this may reflect their response to the survey.

## **Discussion**

Of the 82 returned surveys only 18 (15.7%) were considered usable for analysis. There were 64 returned surveys that did not meet the criteria for this study. The low number of acceptable surveys was partly due to lack of direct access to the participants. Snowball sampling was necessary in order to reach maximum participants, but resulted in returned surveys by those who did not meet all three research criteria for this study. Some surprising data gleaned from this group (the 64 unusable surveys) was the fact that many had no formal university training as EFL teachers, yet were teaching English in their respective schools, the majority of which were primary schools. Causing one to wonder what sort of English education these young children were receiving? What possible bad practices might they be learning in the classroom relative to the range of English language skills and components? Therefore, this may be part of the problem, as reported in the literature, why Thai EFL teachers were under prepared as evidenced by declining student performance in English.

To some extent, the findings of this study do reflect previous studies that described insufficient pre-employment teacher training. For example, Ingersoll et al. (2007) stated that “the problem of low-quality teaching can be traced to inadequate and insufficient pre-employment training” (pp. 1-2). This includes, “lacks adequate rigor, breadth and depth, resulting in high levels of under qualified teachers” (p. 2). Further, student teachers have not had adequate practice teaching or “completed sufficient coursework in their major areas of concentration” (p. 14). Hayes (2010) revealed that “the majority of teacher preparation courses were conducted in

Thai and were not subject-specific” (p. 310). Wiriyaichitra (2004), stated that so far, the English curriculum and the English language teaching in Thai universities neither prepared Thais for the changing world, nor met the demands for English used in the workplace and in the tourism industry because the language skills used most at this level are not focused in listening and speaking. Also, Wiriyaichitra (2004), who conducted her study touching on the problems of English language teaching in Thailand, revealed that teachers in the primary and secondary schools face many challenges and difficulties. For example, there were too many students in a class since there were generally 45 to 60 students. In addition, teachers inadequately equipped classrooms with educational technology. Along the same line, Punthumasen (2007) justified poor progress by saying that “Thai students have little opportunity to practice English on a daily basis” (p. 3). This may be one of the reasons “why most Thai students do not have a high level of English competency despite learning English...at the university level” (p. 3). Darling-Hammond, Chung, and Frelow (2002) suggested that teacher preparation could be strengthened by providing more intensive coursework on subject matter, content pedagogy, and strategies for teaching diverse learners as well as providing “more systematic and connected clinical experiences” (p. 287). This included the suggestion that they “developed 5-year models that include a disciplinary major and intensive training for teaching, including a yearlong student teaching experience” (p. 287).

The findings remind the researcher of Gimbert et al. (2007) who said, “extensive teacher training in a 4- or 5-year program does not guarantee an effective teacher” (p. 93). Indeed, the findings of this current study indicates that even after five years in a teaching program, the EFL teachers still need to improve their English-speaking skills, need to learn more about meaningful teaching methods and activities to generate interesting classrooms, in particular using technology



for teaching. These indicate that EFL teachers who major in English, and have a minor that is related to teaching, such as Technology for Education, would feel better prepared than those who do not.

The demand for qualified teachers has challenged teacher preparation programs to provide new knowledge and skills as well as appropriate field experience to pre-service teachers. On the other hand, the employers (e.g. schools) are expected to provide professional development to novice teachers to fill the gap and update their professional knowledge and skills. However, this study indicates that current professional development has not improved a sense of preparedness among teachers.

This study also suggests that leaders in higher education should investigate their instructors' effectiveness in preparing pre-service teachers who are assigned to teach students who are diverse learners. These teachers need appropriate skills and knowledge to serve all learners in their classrooms. Also, educational leaders should do research to examine the specific differences among the programs in terms of the course content, the instructors who deliver the knowledge and experience, the field practicum, and the approaches toward teaching students in primary and secondary schools.

This study suggests that before making any attempt to revise university teacher education programs, colleges and universities should establish a network between the institutions and newly graduated teachers by creating a database of teachers as a means to stay in touch with those newly graduated. They need to follow up with the EFL teacher to assess their needs after they start teaching in the first few years. Could a teacher training program follow up with its graduates to find out whether the novice teachers are thriving, surviving or struggling in their

teaching career? Based on that information, those who are actively involved in developing or revising the teacher training program or selecting new instructors will have a better assessment on what is needed to improve or continue, stop or start implementing.

This study suggests that EFL teachers' feedback should be a part of revising teacher programs, since the new teachers are able to determine whether they are well equipped to teach or in what area they have not felt prepared well enough to perform their job. In doing so, educational leaders will be able to improve the programs assisting the teacher to learn more effectively and to grow to their fullest teaching potential.

The fact that only five participants responded to the open-ended question (#55) reflects Thai culture, to be polite, to not offend, to not openly talk about problems or critique about how to solve a problem. Voluntarily offering feedback is uncommon in Thai culture. In order to receive comments or critique it has to be required and between trusted individuals. In addition, the fact that only five participated in giving feedback, indicates that teachers are not encouraged to reflect and evaluate on their own effectiveness or the effectiveness of their teacher training programs. They may have concerns about their job security or promotion. Culturally, it is difficult to admit any weakness. Pre-service teachers need to be trained to provide honest and constructive feedback to evaluate their program before graduating. By doing that, they will have enough knowledge and experience to evaluate what has contributed to their personal and professional goals. Could writing a teaching log or journal on different teaching methods be helpful to develop as a teacher and to encourage them to give constructive feedback? Could promoting a safe atmosphere for sharing and giving feedback among EFL teachers within a school be established? This could be done by establishing ground rules and guidelines that state that sharing is a part of the learning process and should be done with respect in a non-

judgmental manner, and everyone should have equal opportunity to share. Implementation of such a program may need to start with a strong administrator who appreciates the value of feedback.

Based on the literature review covered in this study, there were at least 143 undergraduate international programs in governmental higher education institutions and these programs “have been established either independently by Thai institutes or have links with oversea institutes” (Wiriyachitra , 2004, p.2), linking Thai teacher education of English programs with English speaking overseas institutions may strengthen the EFL teacher training programs. Thai EFL teachers would have more opportunity to be exposed to different or better qualities of teacher training and to improve their speaking skills.

Even though my hypothesis was that EFL teachers who perceived themselves as under-prepared would reflect discordant matching, lack of practical field experience, large class size, lack of an education related minor, the data obtained was unfortunately from an insufficiently large enough sample. Because pre-service experience did not improve a sense of preparedness, an effort to improve the pre-service teaching program should be encouraged. These programs are helpful for the teacher in developing their daily assignments and lesson plans.

To some extent, the data and the findings that were obtained from this study have revealed some major source of under prepared EFL teachers. This may provide higher education leaders a better understanding of the need of the knowledge, skills, and experience pre-service teachers need to develop so that they can be ready to teach diverse EFL learners in the first three years of their teaching. The data may give educators who are assigned to develop professional seminars for novice teachers a better understanding of what more knowledge, skills, and

experience in-service teachers need from their employers in order to better perform their entrusted duty. Also, the data and the findings may provide foreign educators a better understanding of how they can best contribute and can receive the most benefits in return when working with Thai students or Thai educators. Finally, understanding the data may enable educational leaders to find richer solutions to the problem of under-prepared EFL teachers.

In summary, this research suggested that those who felt the most prepared were men, Thai-Thai and between ages of 26 and 30. Class size should be limited to less than 34 students. Universities may want to take this into account when selecting EFL teachers. Also, there needs to be better preparation for EFL teachers working in urban and secondary schools. A minor in an education related field is very helpful as is coursework in developmental psychology and learning theory. It is noted that pre-service practice teaching does not need to match actual future teaching assignment. There is need to improve pre-service practice teaching programs. Professional development for current EFL teachers needs to be improved

### **Recommendation for Future Research**

For future research, if possible, researchers should go beyond using survey questionnaires to capture the feeling of “prepared to teach” by using a variety of assessment techniques such as observation of teaching performance, personal interviews, examination of portfolios, and test administration which may better capture the sense of preparedness, both subjectively and objectively.

Future research should incorporate a larger number of teacher preparation programs. The findings would help higher educational leaders to determine how to better design teacher training

programs that offer sufficient preparation to enable novice teachers to feel well or very well prepared to teach.

Interviewing or qualitative investigation into content of courses, language of instruction, activities, and field experience used in teacher training might provide better information about specific differences in teacher preparation programs. Interviewing the professors and instructors of courses required by teachers' preparation programs would also provide rich information about differences in programs.

Understanding the school system and school culture is vital for future researchers who plan to do research in an international context. Understanding this will enable researchers to make informed decisions on how and when to approach the educational leaders who have both the authority and the information that will direct a researcher to the right pool of potential participants. Equally, it is important to create a network and support system to maintain friendly relationships with educational leaders and key school stakeholders at all levels to make an effort to understand their needs and interest. Then make your needs and interests known to them before asking for their help.

Snowball sampling works best if the researchers take time to personally talk to the potential participants and their supervisors and make sure that they understand the purpose, risks and benefits from participating in a study. Also, additional encouragement to complete all survey questions onsite would possibly increase the sample size and usable data.

Because some EFL teachers do not have Internet access at home and instead use the Internet at school or at an Internet café; checking e-mail weekly or monthly, when sending e-mail, they need to be reminded by calling them that the e-mail was sent.

International phone call connections are not easy and even when connected it is easy to be interrupted or disconnected. Therefore, it is important to consider time differences and think about participants teaching schedule and outside time commitments before calling.

Any survey should be conducted at the beginning of a semester when the school is not busy and it does not conflict with any teaching schedule. The researchers should make sure to give themselves enough time because even pre-arranged appointments may be canceled due to uncontrollable circumstances. A researcher may not get that sample the same day. Make every effort to be a part of education conferences in order to be exposed to a bigger pool of EFL teachers. Be ready to give help if they ask. It was the researcher's experience that after meeting with a school administrator and explaining the purpose of this study, the researcher's willingness to participate in an EFL selection process at the school opened doors to meet potential participants for this study.

Finally, due to the fact that the response rate for this study was low and there are still unanswered questions, the researcher plans to use what she learned here as a pilot study to inform future research on this topic as a doctoral student.

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## APPENDIX A. SURVEY INSTRUMENT

Thank you for taking time to assist me in this study of teacher perceptions of preparedness to teach English as a Foreign Language. Completing this survey should take approximately 15 minutes.

Today's date \_\_\_\_\_

1. What is your gender? Female Male
2. What was your age on your last birthday? \_\_\_\_\_
3. What is your race and cultural upbringing?  
 Thai-Thai  Thai-Malay Thai-Chinese  other (please Specify)
4. Please specify the name of the university that you received your bachelor's degree from (example: Rajabhat Yala University). \_\_\_\_\_
5. Please specify your major program of study at your university. \_\_\_\_\_
6. Please specify your minor program of study at your university. \_\_\_\_\_
7. During your university studies, did you complete three or more courses appropriate for the age of the students you taught during your first three years of teaching in...
  - (a) Selecting and adapting instructional material  Yes  No
  - (b) Learning Theory  Yes  No
  - (c) Developmental Psychology  Yes  No
  - (d) Teaching Methods  Yes  No
8. During your university studies, did you complete at least one (1) year of practice teaching?  
 Yes  No
9. At what level did you do your practice teaching?  Primary School  Secondary School
10. At what level do you currently teach? ?  Primary School  Secondary School
11. How many months have you been a teacher? \_\_\_\_\_
12. Is the school where you are currently teaching in a rural or urban area?  Rural  Urban
13. What would you say (on average) is the number of students enrolled in your English classes?
14. Have you received any teacher professional development training since you began teaching?  
 Yes  No

When you first started teaching, how well prepared did you feel you were to:

15. to teach subject matter concepts, knowledge, and skills in ways that enable students to learn.  
 not at all prepared  somewhat prepared  well prepared  very well prepared
16. to understand how different students in your classroom are learning.  
 not at all prepared  somewhat prepared  well prepared  very well prepared
17. to set challenges and appropriate expectations of learning and performance for students.  
 not at all prepared  somewhat prepared  well prepared  very well prepared
18. to help all students achieve high academic standards.  
 not at all prepared  somewhat prepared  well prepared  very well prepared
19. too develop curriculum that builds on students' experiences, interest, and abilities.  
 not at all prepared  somewhat prepared  well prepared  very well prepared

20. to evaluate curriculum materials for their usefulness and appropriateness for your students.  
 not at all prepared  somewhat prepared  well prepared  very well prepared
21. to create discipline-based and interdisciplinary curriculum.  
 not at all prepared  somewhat prepared  well prepared  very well prepared
22. to identify and obtain materials and use community resources to create a multicultural curriculum.  
 not at all prepared  somewhat prepared  well prepared  very well prepared
23. to use instructional strategies that promote active student learning.  
 not at all prepared  somewhat prepared  well prepared  very well prepared
24. to relate classroom learning to the real world.  
 not at all prepared  somewhat prepared  well prepared  very well prepared
25. to understand how students' social, emotional, physical, and cognitive development influences learning.  
 not at all prepared  somewhat prepared  well prepared  very well prepared
26. to understand how students' family and cultural backgrounds may influence learning.  
 not at all prepared  somewhat prepared  well prepared  very well prepared
27. to identify and address special learning needs and/or difficulties.  
 not at all prepared  somewhat prepared  well prepared  very well prepared
28. to teach in ways that support new English learners.  
 not at all prepared  somewhat prepared  well prepared  very well prepared
29. to choose teaching strategies for different instructional purposes.  
 not at all prepared  somewhat prepared  well prepared  very well prepared
30. to choose teaching strategies to meet different student needs.  
 not at all prepared  somewhat prepared  well prepared  very well prepared
31. to help students become self-motivated and self-directed.  
 not at all prepared  somewhat prepared  well prepared  very well prepared
32. to develop a classroom environment that promotes social development and group responsibility.  
 not at all prepared  somewhat prepared  well prepared  very well prepared
33. to develop students' questioning and discussion skills.  
 not at all prepared  somewhat prepared  well prepared  very well prepared
34. to engage students in cooperative group as well as independent learning.  
 not at all prepared  somewhat prepared  well prepared  very well prepared
35. to use effective verbal and nonverbal communication strategies to guide student learning behavior.  
 not at all prepared  somewhat prepared  well prepared  very well prepared
36. to use questions to stimulate different kinds of student learning.  
 not at all prepared  somewhat prepared  well prepared  very well prepared
37. to help students learn to think critically and solve problems.  
 not at all prepared  somewhat prepared  well prepared  very well prepared
38. to encourage students to see, question, and interpret ideas from diverse perspectives.  
 not at all prepared  somewhat prepared  well prepared  very well prepared

39. to plan instruction by using knowledge of learning subject matter, curriculum, and student development.  
 not at all prepared  somewhat prepared  well prepared  very well prepared
40. to understand how factors in the student's environment outside of school may influence their life and learning.  
 not at all prepared  somewhat prepared  well prepared  very well prepared
41. to work with parents and families to better understand students and to support their learning.  
 not at all prepared  somewhat prepared  well prepared  very well prepared
42. to use a variety of assessments (e.g., observation, portfolio, tests, performance tasks, anecdotal records) to determine student strengths, needs, and programs.  
 not at all prepared  somewhat prepared  well prepared  very well prepared
43. to help students learn how to assess their own learning.  
 not at all prepared  somewhat prepared  well prepared  very well prepared
44. to evaluate and reflection on your practice to improve instruction.  
 not at all prepared  somewhat prepared  well prepared  very well prepared
45. to resolve interpersonal conflict in the classroom.  
 not at all prepared  somewhat prepared  well prepared  very well prepared
46. to maintain an orderly, purposeful learning environment.  
 not at all prepared  somewhat prepared  well prepared  very well prepared
47. to plan and solve problems with colleagues.  
 not at all prepared  somewhat prepared  well prepared  very well prepared
48. to assume leadership responsibilities in your school.  
 not at all prepared  somewhat prepared  well prepared  very well prepared
49. to increase student interests and learning.  
 not at all prepared  somewhat prepared  well prepared  very well prepared
50. to use technology to support research and analysis (i.e., accessing the internet).  
 not at all prepared  somewhat prepared  well prepared  very well prepared
51. to use technology to assess and track student achievement.  
 not at all prepared  somewhat prepared  well prepared  very well prepared
52. to use technology to communicate with others (in school, city, state, country, and world).  
 not at all prepared  somewhat prepared  well prepared  very well prepared
53. to use technology to enhance group collaboration and teamwork.  
 not at all prepared  somewhat prepared  well prepared  very well prepared
54. Overall, how well prepared did you feel you were when you first started teaching?  
 not at all prepared  somewhat prepared  well prepared  very well prepared
55. Are there any other comments you would care to make concerning your university preparation as an EFL teacher? If so, please feel free to add them here. \_\_\_\_\_

This concludes the survey. If you would like to receive a copy of the results, please send me an e-mail with the subject line "Request EFL Teacher Study Result." at Anuchida.Scholz@my.ndsu.edu. Thank you.

## APPENDIX B. IRB APPROVAL



Friday, June 07, 2013

FederalWide Assurance FWA00002439

Dr. Thomas Hall  
School of Education

**Re:** IRB Certification of Exempt Human Subjects Research:  
Protocol #HE13250, "Investigating the Perception of EFL Teachers in Thailand: To What  
Extent Do EFL Teachers Feel Prepared to Teach"

Co-investigator(s) and research team: **Anuchida Scholz**

Certification Date: 6/7/2013      Expiration Date: 6/6/2016  
Study site(s): **varied**  
Funding: **n/a**

The above referenced human subjects research project has been certified as exempt (category # 2) in accordance with federal regulations (Code of Federal Regulations, Title 45, Part 46, *Protection of Human Subjects*). This determination is based on protocol materials (received 6/7/2013).

Please also note the following:

- **Please provide a copy of the translated consent form once available.**
  - If you wish to continue the research after the expiration, submit a request for recertification several weeks prior to the expiration.
  - Conduct the study as described in the approved protocol. If you wish to make changes, obtain approval from the IRB prior to initiating, unless the changes are necessary to eliminate an immediate hazard to subjects.
  - Notify the IRB promptly of any adverse events, complaints, or unanticipated problems involving risks to subjects or others related to this project.
  - Report any significant new findings that may affect the risks and benefits to the participants and the IRB.
  - Research records may be subject to a random or directed audit at any time to verify compliance with IRB standard operating procedures.

Thank you for your cooperation with NDSU IRB procedures. Best wishes for a successful study.  
Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Kristy Shirley".

Kristy Shirley, CIP, Research Compliance Administrator

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