



Profiles, Differences, and Roles of Learners' Agency in English Learning in Thailand

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Human agency theory has been known for more than two decades, but the applications in EFL learning are still insufficiently researched and the roles in enhancing English proficiency are still little explored. This study, thus, examined learners' agency in English learning and investigated the role in English proficiency. Using a quantitative research design, it collected data from 13 non-English disciplines of schools at a university in the south of Thailand. The total number of participants was 389 undergraduate students (22.4% male; 76.9% female; .8% prefer not to say) involving 43.4% 2nd and 56.6% 1st-year students with levels of proficiency ranging from A1 to B1 in the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR). The data were analysed by using descriptive statistics, independent t-test, one-way ANOVA, bivariate correlation, multiple linear regression, and mediation analysis. The results indicated a higher level of learners' agency for learning with some variations by year of study and proficiency level. Thai EFL learners' agency for learning had predictive roles on their proficiency, yet no potential mediators were observed.

Keywords: agency for learning, English proficiency, human agency, learners' agency, Thai EFL learners

INTRODUCTION

There has been a paradigm shift upon how human agency is exercised from psychological into social cognitive theory providing an agentic conceptual framework that enables analysis of determinants and psychosocial mechanisms influencing human thought, affect and action (Bandura, 2001). Agency refers to one's capacity to exercise control over phenomenal and functional consciousness while human, as an agent, needs to be conscious to deliberately select and execute actions to achieve desired outcomes (Martin et al., 2003). Conceptually, there are four core properties of human agency involving *intentionality* – encompassing plans and strategies to attain desired outcomes,

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forethought – anticipating any possible outcome of prospective actions, *self-reactiveness/self-regulation* – constructing appropriate courses of actions and regulating execution, and *self-reflectiveness/self-efficacy* – conducting self-reflection during and after the process of attaining desired goals (Bandura, 2006). In the last decade, the body of the literature has depicted a growing number of empirical studies attempting to research the role and application of human agency in the teaching and learning processes occurring in the form of learner agency in learning. Human agency has been considered of importance in learner learning, yet there are still limited empirical studies specifically measuring the role of learner's agency in learning and this is commonly caused by the difficulty to interpret the concept of 'agency' that can shift depending on the epistemological roots and goals of scholars who use it (Hitlin & Elder, 2007).

Given the importance of human agency in the form of learners' agency in learning, the present study attempts to bring the concept to the field of English Language Teaching (ELT), which is still insufficiently explored. This attempt is expected to offer new insight on how to comprehend the agency of learners studying English as a foreign language (EFL). In the context of EFL learning, a learner's agency is viewed as a complex dynamic system involving motivation, affect, and self-regulation that appears as the controlling components within learner's English learning agentic system (Mercer, 2011). Such capacity is the starting point before learners are engaged with learning resources and decide to exercise their agency in a particular learning context (Mercer, 2012). As the practice of English teaching and learning is heading towards the concepts of learner-centeredness, autonomy, and self-directed learning, it has become of importance for learners to have and develop a sense of agency in their learning to make the most use of existing learning opportunities (Gremmo & Riley, 1995; Murray, 1999). However, despite such important roles it plays, the ideas of learner's agency in EFL learning have not been extensively researched and still lack clarity causing absurdity in understanding and interpretation. As Hitlin and Elder (2007) point out, different scholars in different fields seem to have a different interpretation of learners' agency in learning, while there is not much discussion about this concept in EFL context, not to mention that research explaining the profiles of EFL learners' agency in learning, the differences across gender and proficiency, and the role of learners' agency in EFL learners' English skill development is scarce. To address such gaps, this study, hence, aims to present empirical evidence on the profiles, differences, roles of learner's agency in EFL learning among Thai EFL learners at the university level. The findings are expected not only to shed light on and encourage further research in Agency for Learning (AFL) in the EFL learning context but also to clear up the absurdity in understanding and interpreting the concept of learners' agency in EFL learning.

Literature Review

Human Agency and Agency for Learning (AFL)

The theory of human agency was further developed by Bandura within the conceptual model of triadic, reciprocal causation. Human agency symbolizes the capacity enabling humans to, " ... transcend the dictates of their immediate environment and make them unique in their power to shape their life circumstances and the courses their lives take"

(Bandura, 2006, p.164). The conception lies in people's contributions to their life circumstances. The causal processes occur when the system created by humans starts to organize and have effects on their lives. In the operation, human agency can be conceptualized in three different ways, including *autonomous agency* – viewing humans as independent agents of their own actions which can be in causal processes with environmental influences, *mechanical agency* – considering humans as an internal instrumentality affected by external influences operating mechanistically on action, and *emergent interactive agency* – seeing humans as those who make a causal contribution to their own action within a system of triadic reciprocal causation (Bandura, 1986, 1989). From this point, it is important to emphasize that Bandura's theory of human agency was not intentionally and specifically proposed to frame triadic, reciprocal causation happening in the teaching and learning processes, at least in its early phase of development.

Therefore, rooted in Bandura's theory of human agency (1986, 2001), Code (2010) proposed an extension model of human agency based on social cognitive theory, called Agency for Learning (AFL), which offers interpretations of human agency from the perspective of learners in learning contexts. The model elaborates agentic processes in Bandura's human agency encompassing intentionality, forethought, self-regulation, and self-efficacy. It allows the exploration of the relationship of agency involving personal, behavioral, and social-environmental factors surrounding learners in their learning process. In the latest publication, Code (2020) examined the reliability and validity of the Agency for Learning Questionnaire (AFLQ) and generated a set of questionnaires useful for measuring learner's agency in learning, which was, then, adopted by the present study to be applied in evaluating learner's agency in English learning in Thai context. The questionnaire is recognized as a standardized measure of academic behavior which may situate agentic capabilities in individuals in different contexts. This study, nevertheless, only adopted the long form of AFLQ consisting of 42 items for more elaborated responses and the reliability and validity of the items were, further, examined to see the suitability for EFL learners in Thailand. Besides, a pilot study was conducted before the questionnaires were distributed to the target participants for ensuring the reliability of the test items, as elaborated in the method section.

Applications of Learners' Agency in English Learning

The theory of human agency has long been recognized in the fields of Psychology and Sociology since the 1980s, yet research examining the roles of learners' agency in English as a foreign language learning is still in its development phase. In a simple term, learners' agency can be perceived synonymously as the actions that are conducted by learners, which are driven by the desires existing within themselves; at this point, agentic language learners commonly appear as active participants in constructing and controlling their own learning (Allwright & Hanks, 2009; Ranjan et al., 2021). Nonetheless, to be able to construct and control their own English learning, learners may need to be aware of and able to effectively exercise the four core properties of human agency involving intentionality, forethought, self-reactiveness/ self-regulation, and self-reflectiveness/ self-efficacy. Understanding how learners develop and exercise these

four properties in their EFL learning can potentially offer valuable knowledge in the efforts of enhancing learner-centeredness in learning. An empirical study from Korhonen (2014), who investigated the interrelationships among learners' agency, autonomy, and identity in foreign language learning, suggests close interconnections among the three variables, in which learners' agency mediates learners' autonomy and identity. Unfortunately, there is a limited number of studies examining the roles of learners' agency using the four core properties altogether, which is one of the gaps that the present study intends to close. The following sections provide a brief review of the applications of learners' agency in language/ English learning from previous studies.

To identify the roles of learner's agency in learning, there are four core agentic properties involved, which include Intention, Forethought, Self-Regulation, and Self-Efficacy (Bandura, 2001). First, intention is an individual's mental consciousness to willingly act in a particular way (Lewis, 1990; Owen, 2009), portrayed through goal setting and planning. At this point, the present study operationally defines intentionality in a way where students are individuals who can make rational decisions as they have set their goals within the circumstances they are involved. From there, students are expected to project the outcomes of their actions through forethought. Second, forethought is a temporal extension of agency and involves the ability to anticipate the outcomes of actions (Bandura, 2001), in task analysis, motivational beliefs, and goal settings for specified academic tasks. In this study, forethought is manifested in the condition where students can motivate themselves and direct their actions by anticipating future happenings (Tran & Phan Tran, 2021). When students can manage themselves to be motivated, they will form an act to regulate their behavior in achieving their goals through self-regulation. Third, self-regulation refers to the idea of how an individual can regulate his or her thoughts, feelings, and actions to meet with his or her personal goals within constraints for learning (Zimmerman, 2000), which can operationally be interpreted from how students can decide their learning strategies to meet their desired learning outcomes. The last agentic property emerges as self-efficacy, which denotes an ability of someone to self-reflect on his or her actions which is an essential condition of human functioning (Bandura, 1997). Here, the operational definition is focused on the view that students are individuals who can reflect on their thoughts and actions, which is a belief that one should have in academic situations. Self-efficacy is essential in contributing to students' performance, motivation, and interest (Panadero et al., 2017; Garcia-Martín & García-Sánchez, 2018).

Intentionality

Intentionality was initially developed by Piaget (1936-1952). The focus was on the development of causality and intentionality among children. Then, Lewis (1990) further explored the origins of intentionality through young child's learning and elaborated the levels of intentionality as well as the working system. In 2006, Bandura included intentionality as one core property in human agency within the social cognitive theory. There is no precise definition of intentionality specifically proposed for the context of learning and EFL learning. As explained earlier, the theory of human agency was not intentionally developed for understanding the context of learning; therefore, Code

(2010) made an extension of the theory and created the term ‘Agency for Learning (AFL)’. Nevertheless, all the concepts of intentionality since Piaget’s era involve the words “goal setting and planning” in the effort of realizing desired circumstances. Thus, this study interprets intentionality within the framework of goal setting and planning; as an illustration, students make rational decisions as they have set their goals within circumstances they are involved in (Bandura, 2006; Code, 2010, 2020).

Within the limited number of empirical studies, it has been found that early studies have pointed out that learners’ intentionality has a close connection to their writing achievement and proficiency (Cumming, 1986, 1989). Recently, Berge et al. (2019) conducted a study on learners’ intentionality in writing in the form of ‘Wheel of Writing’ in primary and lower secondary schools in Norway. Their study indicates substantial variations in learners’ writing quality by schools, classes, and individual students. Intentionality is also argued to be crucial in performing L2/foreign language acquisition tasks (Lennon, 1989), such as in speaking (Ortega, 1999). Stelma (2014) used discourse analysis to investigate how learners generate their own intentionality for classroom activities and she concluded that the impacts of different levels of intentionality that learners have may be visible in the form of task engagement, e.g., speaking and writing, as learners are required to set plans to attain the task goals.

Forethought

It refers to the ability to anticipate the outcomes of actions (Bandura, 2001). Bandura (2006) illustrates, “People set themselves goals and anticipate likely outcomes of prospective actions to guide and motivate their efforts” (p.164). In the context of learning, such a condition occurs when students can motivate themselves and direct their actions by anticipating future events. In the long run, such ability can lead to situations where students can self-regulate their own learning; thus, forethought is included in the framework of self-regulated learning established by Zimmerman (2000). Existing research also often includes forethought as one of scales/sub-scales within self-regulated learning investigation. A brief review of the findings of recent studies has indicated that forethought is a significant predictor of English proficiency (Tshuchiya, 2019) and has a role in improving listening proficiency (Yabukoshi, 2018); Most of the previous studies discussed forethought as part of self-regulated learning and have indicated some positive correlations with writing (Karami et al., 2019) and reading comprehension (Mohammadi et al., 2020).

Self-regulation

Bandura (1991) defines, “Self-regulation is a multifaceted phenomenon operating through a number of subsidiary cognitive processes including self-monitoring, standard-setting, evaluative judgment, self-appraisal, and affective self-reaction” (p.282). It is an active, constructive process that occurs after learners have set their learning goals and plans and then try to monitor, regulate, and control their motivation, behavior, and cognition during the learning process until the goals are attained (Pintrich, 2000). The development of learners’ agency in self-regulation can be influenced by the so-called “socializing agents” such as parents, teachers, and peers, those who exist in learners’ learning environments (Zimmerman, 2000). With regards to self-regulation in language

learning, Tsuda and Nakata (2013), who studied Japanese high school EFL students, also suggest the important roles of teachers in the process of developing and optimizing learners' agency in self-regulation. Latest empirical studies in EFL learning have confirmed that learners' agency in self-regulation has positive effects on reading comprehension and metacognition (Fukuda, 2018; Roohani & Asiabani, 2015), can significantly predict language achievement and proficiency (Seker, 2016), can be different by gender (Tseng et al., 2017), can affect writing achievement (Adaros, 2017), and can be a significant predictor of speaking performance (Mahmoodi & Karampour, 2019).

Self-efficacy

Among the four core properties of learners' agency for learning, self-efficacy seems to be the most popular one, which also gives the impression that the concept is easy to be interpreted in the EFL learning context. Basically, self-efficacy is functional awareness that enables learners to reflect on their competency, thought, and action, which may involve a decision-making process if required (Bandura, 2006). In EFL learning, self-efficacy is perceived as learners' judgment upon their English competencies. The roles of self-efficacy on learners' English proficiency have been examined in various ways. In Woodrow's investigation (2011), among Chinese university students, it was observed that self-efficacy and anxiety could predict students' writing performance and in a revised model, self-efficacy could mediate between anxiety and writing performance. Jaekel (2018) analyzed the effects of self-efficacy and CLIL on language proficiency in the context of language learning strategies. The analysis disclosed that among 378 EFL students in Germany, self-efficacy could predict higher language proficiency while it was negatively impacted by students' use of learning strategies. To date, self-efficacy has been suggested to play a key role in EFL students' English proficiency (Saleem & Ab Rashid, 2018); not only does it influence English proficiency in general, but it can also affect students' proficiency in speaking (Zhang & Ardasheva, 2019), listening (Graham, 2011), reading (Ghabdian & Ghafournia, 2016) and writing (Woodrow, 2011).

The Study

From the literature review, it can be assumed that despite the importance and popularity of human agency theory on conceptualizing humans as agents of their actions which can significantly affect their success in attaining desired outcomes, the application of the theory in the context of learning is still rare to be found. Hence, Code (2010, 2020) proposed Agency for Learning (AFL) as an extension of human agency theory to be applied in the context of learners' agency in learning. Then, the present study intends to initiate the exploration on the roles of learners' AFL in EFL learning. The emphasis is placed on examining the profiles, differences, and roles of learners' AFL on their English proficiency both in the cases of low and high proficiency EFL learners. The interplay among the four core properties of human agency is interpreted as learners as agents of planners (intentionality), agents of forethinkers (forethought), agents of self-regulators (self-regulation), and agents of examiners of their functionings (self-efficacy), as illustrated in Figure 1 below.

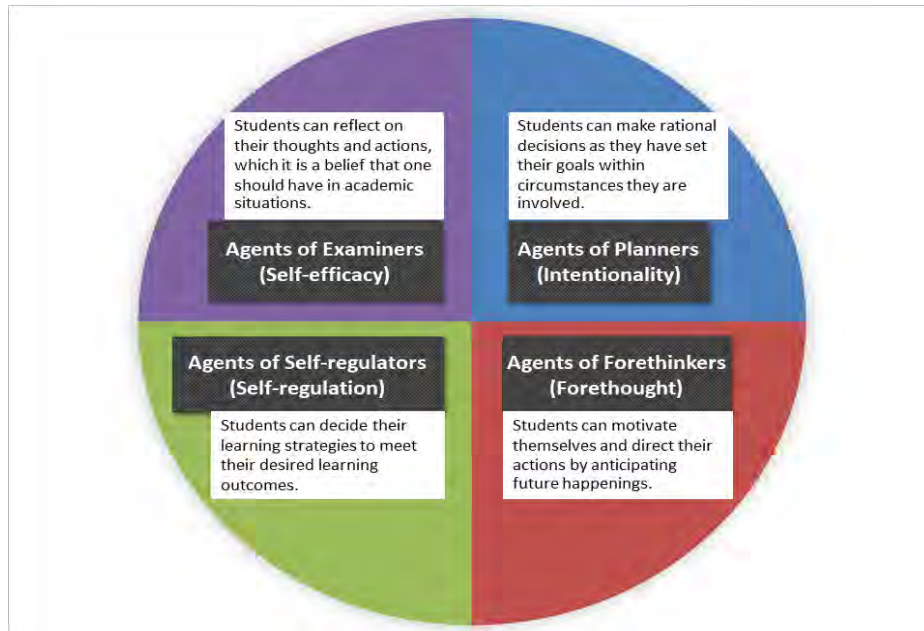


Figure 1
Four agentic properties in learner's agency for learning

The research questions are formulated as follows:

1. What are the profiles of Thai EFL learners' agency in English learning including Intention, Forethought, Self-Regulation, and Self-Efficacy? Are there significant differences by gender, year of study, and proficiency?
2. To what extent do Thai EFL learners' agency for learning and the four agentic properties correlate with and predict proficiency levels in general and specific skills (listening, reading, writing, and speaking)?

METHOD

Research Design

The study utilized a quantitative research design to investigate Thai EFL learners' agency in English learning. Significant variations and predictive powers among the variables of interest were also explored. Such research objectives can be aided by a quantitative research strategy (Fryer & Ginns, 2018). Figure 2 below illustrates the research design.

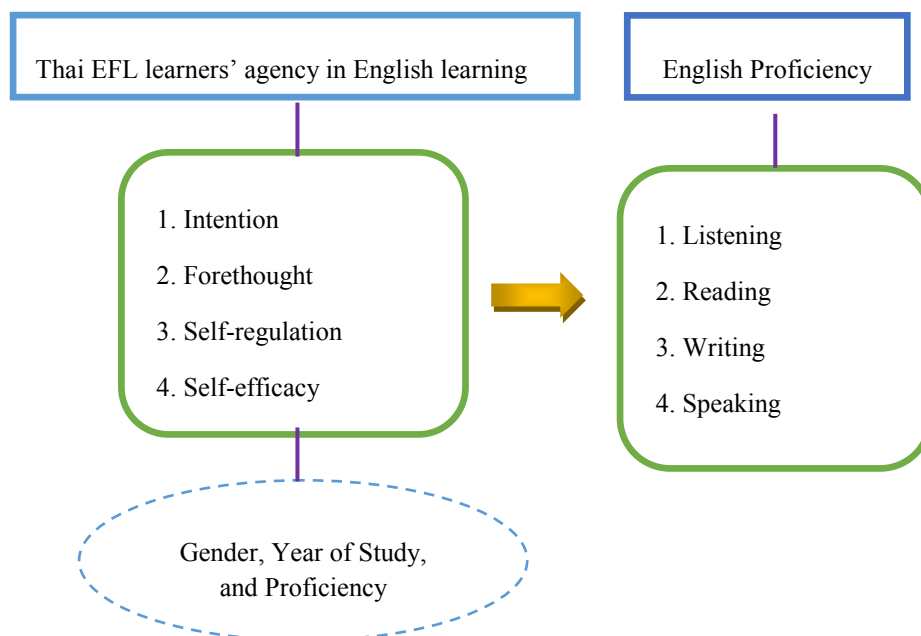


Figure 2
Illustration of the research design

Participants

The participants were purposely sampled from 13 non-English disciplines of schools at a university in the south of Thailand, including Agricultural Technology, Informatics, Public Health, Political Science and Law, Liberal Arts, Allied Health Sciences, Science, Engineering and Technology, Management, Medicine, Nursing, Pharmacy, and Architecture and Design enrolled in general English courses in the 3rd academic term of Academic Year 2019/20. In total, there were 389 undergraduate students (22.4% male; 76.9% female; .8% prefer not to say) involved in this study, in which 43.4% (169) of them were 2nd year and 56.6% (220) were 1st-year students. Their English proficiency levels were measured by using a standardized test named WU-TEP (Walailak University Test of English Proficiency). The results ($N = 389$) revealed that 50.9% of the students were at A1, 41.6% were at A2, and 7.5% were at B1 levels based on the CEFR (Common European of Reference for Languages). Their age ranged from 18 to 22 years old with the average at 20.

Instrument and Measure

A survey questionnaire and English proficiency test were employed in this study.

1. Agency for learning questionnaire

To measure Thai EFL learners' agency for learning, this study followed the concepts proposed by Code (2010, 2020). Measuring learner's agency in learning contexts is

described as how personal and social aspects of students are inherent with their ways to regulate, control, monitor their own learning (Code, 2010). This means that students are the ones who are capable to interrelate themselves in environmental, behavioral, social, personal factors when they establish their learning process. Thus, it can be considered as an intermediary for their academic achievement as believed that agency works within learning contexts as socially situated, temporal, and emergent (Code, 2010). Referring to how agency can be enabled, Mead (1934) posited an idea that agency develops as social mediation occurs in learning communities through practices and expressions of human agency. At this stage, students are defined as individuals who can express their orientations for motivation, intention, and choices as they interact with other students or even groups in their learning contexts. Agency also emerges temporally as how individuals allow their personal learning processes within a temporal and recursive pattern (Emirbayer & Mische, 1998). This represents an idea that students are personally and socially affected by their habits in the past, contingency in the present, and projections in the future of their learnings. Meanwhile, Martin (2003) adds how agency can acquire an emergent capability as he or she can develop a fundamental element in reflecting thoughts and intentional actions within socio-cultural aspects. This can be further explained as students possess an ability to constantly change as environmental forces interact with them in a variety of ways when producing intentions and actions.

As the study was intended to investigate the roles of Agency for Learning in Thai EFL learners and whether they played a significant role in their English proficiency levels, a survey was conducted using Agency for Learning Questionnaire Long Form validated by Code (2010, 2020), selectively outlined by Fletcher and Nusbaum (2010). This set of questionnaires represents agentic engagements in four core properties in learner's agency which may reflect on their mental consciousness, intentional actions, motivational beliefs, and goal settings in their learning outcomes. The questionnaire had 42 items which consisted of 8 items for measuring intentionality, 16 items for measuring forethought, 10 items for measuring self-regulation, and 8 items for measuring self-efficacy. It used a 5-point Likert scale ranging from "1" (Does not correspond to) to "5" (Corresponds exactly). The sample questionnaire items from each category can be seen in Table 1 below.

Table 1
Sample questionnaire items

Item	Statement	Category
1	I take a lot of care before choosing.	Intentionality
7	I think that I am a good decision maker.	Intentionality
9	Because it is part of the way in which I have chosen to live my life	Forethought
18	Because I experience pleasure and satisfaction while learning new things	Forethought
25	I know exactly how to decrease my nervousness.	Self-Regulation
30	When something upsets me, I can easily calm down.	Self-Regulation
35	Study when there are other interesting things to do	Self-Efficacy
40	Remember information presented in lecture and textbooks	Self-Efficacy

2. English proficiency test

Aside from measuring the four agentic properties of Thai EFL learners' agency, this study also used English proficiency levels as the other variable of interest. Learners' proficiency levels in overall and each skill were assessed by using WUTEP (Walailak University Test of English Proficiency) for it has been used extensively for measuring students' English proficiency levels at the university. According to Waluyo (2019a), WUTEP is a standardized test developed using Classical Test Theory (CTT) and the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR). The results of the test range from pre-A1 to C1. The scores have been mapped on other international standardized tests, including IELTS, TOEIC, and TOEFL. Every year, WUTEP is used to measure more than 2000 1st- and 2nd-year students' English proficiency level at Walailak University. The test format is presented in Table 2.

Table 2
English proficiency test

Test Format	Total Questions	Duration
1. Listening consists of four parts:	50	
Part 1: Statements and pictures	5	
Part 2: Statements and responses	15	40 minutes
Part 3: Conversations	15	
Part 4: Talks	15	
2. Reading consists of three parts:	50	
Part 5: Sentence completion	20	60 minutes
Part 6: An e-mail completion	5	
Part 7: Reading comprehension: single passage and double passages	25	
3. Writing	1	
Topic prompt essay		40 minutes
4. Speaking		
A discussion with a lecturer involving self-introduction, speaking about a topic, and questions-answers.		5 minutes

From the test format above, WUTEP's scoring procedure has been standardized based on CEFR levels with listening and reading skills assessed using 100 multiple choices each as detailed in the table, while writing and speaking skills assessed based on their abilities to complete a set of tasks following standardized rubrics. Foreign language lecturers from different countries, such as The Philippines, India, Bhutan, Indonesia, Malaysia, etc., were a part of the WUTEP assessors that received an orientation prior to the test days.

Data Collection

Before conducting the data collection for this research, a pilot study was carried out to examine the reliability of the items in the Agency for Learning Questionnaire Long Form. It was conducted from March 6 to 13, 2020. The pilot involved 3rd-year students enrolled in English for Business Communication who were excluded from the target participants of this study. After cleaning up invalid questionnaire data, it was discovered

that there were 72 students, with 79.2 % of them were female, outnumbering male students and those who preferred not to say theirs. The purpose of the pilot study was to see if there were any unreliable items or any items that needed to be revised. Measurement of internal consistency using Cronbach's Alpha was utilized. The outcomes displayed high internal consistency for all the items (see Table 3), implying that none of the items had to be revised or deleted. Hence, the questionnaire was, then, distributed to the target participants of this study by using Google Form distributed through a QR code from March 23 to 27, 2020. The nature of participants in this study was voluntary. The participants were given full information how the data collection would be anonymous without affecting their grades before they filled in the responses, and the survey took about 10 to 15 minutes to complete.

Table 3
Results of internal consistency

Item	Number of Items	Cronbach's Alpha (α)	M/SD
Intention	8	0.887	3.88/.55
Forethought	16	0.940	4.03/.49
Self-Regulation	10	0.894	3.79/.53
Self-Efficacy	8	0.888	3.84/.56
Agency for Learning (Overall)	42	0.874	3.88/.45

Data Analysis

Data cleaning and preparation took place after data collection. The data had a normal distribution with the skewness and kurtosis between -2 and +2 for all items (George & Mallery, 2010). Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) was, first, performed to organize the items into constructs. The KMO (Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin measure) results disclosed sampling adequacy higher than the threshold of .50 (Field, 2018), which was .965, validated by the Bartlett's test of sphericity: $\chi^2(861) = 12129.498$, $p < .001$. Using Principal Axis Factoring (PAF) with Varimax rotation with the cut-off point at .50, the results revealed four factors that had eigenvalues higher than 1 (Fabrigar & Wegener, 2012), which encompassed Intentionality (*Eigenvalue* = 1.702), Forethought (*Eigenvalue* = 19.046), Self-Regulation (*Eigenvalue* = 3.112), and Self-Efficacy (*Eigenvalue* = 1.923), explaining 58% of the total variance. Afterward, the reliability analysis was performed again on the collected data. The results maintained high internal consistency among the items: Intentionality ($\alpha = .837$), Forethought ($\alpha = .958$), Self-Regulation ($\alpha = .921$), and Self-Efficacy ($\alpha = .914$). After the reliability analysis, the data were proceeded to the next stage of data analysis. The first research question was examined by using descriptive statistics, independent t-test, and one-way ANOVA, while the second research question was explored by performing bivariate correlation, multiple-linear regression, and mediation analysis. The mean was interpreted using three scales: 3.5 – 5 (High level), 2.5 – 3.4 = (Moderate level), and 1-2.4 = (Low level), as suggested by Oxford (1990).

FINDINGS

Profiles and Differences of Thai EFL Learners' Agency in English Learning

Overall, the learners reported a high level of agency for learning ($M = 3.91$, $SD = .51$). Among the four agentic properties, the learners scored the highest on forethought ($M = 4.04$, $SD = .59$), followed by intentionality ($M = 3.99$, $SD = .53$), self-efficacy ($M = 3.84$, $SD = .62$), and self-regulation ($M = 3.79$, $SD = .65$). There were no significant differences between male and female learners' agency for learning, yet some significant variations were found by year of study. First-year students had a significant higher level of agency for learning than second-year students ($t(387) = -2.26$, $p = .02$) with a small effect size (*Cohen's d* = .23); the same case also happened to first-year students' agency on forethought ($t(387) = -2.23$, $p = .03$) and self-efficacy ($t(387) = -2.23$, $p = .03$) with small effect sizes (*Cohen's d* = .23). Nevertheless, significant variations were not observed on intentionality and self-regulation, implying that first- and second year students held the same levels in their ability as planners and self-regulators for their own learning, as presented in Table 4.

Table 4
Profiles of Thai EFL learners' agency for learning

Agency (<i>M, SD</i>), <i>N</i> = 389	Gender (<i>M, SD</i>)		Independent t-test	Year of study (<i>M, SD</i>)		Independent t-test
	M (<i>N</i> = 87)	F (<i>N</i> = 299)		Between M and F	1 st (<i>N</i> = 169)	
AFL (3.91, .51)	(3.99, .58)	(3.89, .49)	$t(384) = 1.53$, $p = .13$	(3.97, .49)	(3.85, .54)	$t(387) = -2.26$, $p = .03^*$
INT (3.99, .54)	(4.07, .58)	(3.97, .52)	$t(384) = 1.57$, $p = .12$	(4.03, .53)	(3.94, .54)	$t(387) = -1.57$, $p = .117$
FORE (4.04, .59)	(4.13, .64)	(4.01, .58)	$t(384) = 1.58$, $p = .12$	(4.10, .54)	(3.96, .65)	$t(387) = -2.23$, $p = .03^*$
REG (3.79, .65)	(3.87, .70)	(3.76, .64)	$t(384) = 1.44$, $p = .15$	(3.83, .62)	(3.72, .68)	$t(387) = -1.68$, $p = .09$
EFF (3.84, .62)	(3.88, .74)	(3.83, .59)	$t(384) = .68$, $p = .13$	(3.90, .59)	(3.76, .65)	$t(387) = -2.23$, $p = .03^*$

Notes: AFL = Agency for Learning; INT = intentionality; FORE = forethought; REG = self-regulation; EFF = self-efficacy; M = male; F = female; 1st = 1st year students; 2nd = 2nd year students; * $p < .05$

With regards to proficiency levels, the one-way ANOVA revealed significant differences on learners' agency for learning across proficiency levels ($F(2, 386) = 3.68$, $p = .03$) with a large effect size ($\eta^2 = .13$). Further, the Tukey post-hoc test indicated that A1 level learners had a significant higher level of agency for learning ($M = 3.98$, $SD = .49$, $p = .04$) than A2 levels; however, significant differences were not seen between B1 and A1 and B1 and A2 levels students. Of the four agentic properties, significant

differences were only observed on learners' self-efficacy levels ($F(2, 386) = 5.17, p = .01$) with a large effect size ($\eta^2 = .16$). The Tukey post-hoc test displayed that A1 level learners possessed higher levels of self-efficacy than A2 ($M = 3.94, SD = .59, p = .03$) and B1 ($M = 3.94, SD = .49, p = .4$) learners. Table 5 and 6 below provide the detailed results of the one-way ANOVA and Post-Hoc tests.

Table 5
Differences of Thai EFL learners' agency across proficiency levels

		df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Agency for Learning (AFL)	Between Groups	2	.960	3.677	.026*
	Within Groups	386	.261		
	Total	388			
Intentionality	Between Groups	2	.689	2.426	.090
	Within Groups	386	.284		
	Total	388			
Forethought	Between Groups	2	.957	2.740	.066
	Within Groups	386	.349		
	Total	388			
Self-regulation	Between Groups	2	.747	1.771	.172
	Within Groups	386	.422		
	Total	388			
Self-efficacy	Between Groups	2	1.956	5.166	.006*
	Within Groups	386	.379		
	Total	388			

Table 6
Results of Post-Hoc Tukey HSD (only significant results presented)

Dependent Variable	(I) Proficiency	(J) Proficiency	Mean Difference (I-J)	Std. Error	Sig.
Agency for learning (AFL)	A1	A2	.13477*	.05413	.035
		B1	.16658	.10159	.230
	A2	A1	-.13477*	.05413	.035
		B1	.03181	.10302	.949
	B1	A1	-.16658	.10159	.230
		A2	-.03181	.10302	.949
Self-efficacy	A1	A2	.17095*	.06519	.025
		B1	.29768*	.12234	.041
	A2	A1	-.17095*	.06519	.025
		B1	.12673	.12407	.564
	B1	A1	-.29768*	.12234	.041
		A2	-.12673	.12407	.564

*. The mean difference is significant at the 0.05 level.

Roles of Thai EFL Learners' Agency in English Proficiency

To illustrate the roles of Thai EFL learners' agency for learning on proficiency, the collected data were examined by using bivariate correlations and hierarchical multiple regression. First, as shown in Table 7, the results of the bivariate correlations showed

two positive results: 1) the interrelationships between Thai EFL learners' agency for learning and the four agentic properties were positively strong ($r > .7$), indicating that the created items appropriately measured Thai EFL learners' agency for learning and 2) the interrelationships between Thai EFL learners' overall proficiency and proficiency in each skill were significantly positive, with the strongest correlation between reading proficiency and overall proficiency ($r = .84$) and writing proficiency and overall proficiency ($r = .82$), followed by speaking proficiency and overall proficiency ($r = .76$) and listening proficiency and overall proficiency ($r = .75$). Nonetheless, negative correlations were obtained between Thai EFL learners' agency for learning with writing, speaking, and overall proficiency yet the coefficient strengths were very weak ($r < .3$). Thai EFL learners' forethought was negatively correlated with their writing and speaking proficiency, while their self-efficacy was negatively correlated with their listening, writing, and overall proficiency; all these negative correlations had very weak strengths ($r < .3$). Meanwhile, the learners' intentionality did not have correlations with any proficiency.

Table 7
Results of bivariate correlations

	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
1	.817**	.873**	.848**	.886**	-.087	-.045	-.106*	-.106*	-.113*
2		.693**	.542**	.617**	-.047	.022	-.080	-.016	-.048
3			.617**	.694**	-.055	-.009	-.100*	-.113*	-.094
4				.705**	-.085	-.081	-.076	-.092	-.104*
5					-.107*	-.076	-.107*	-.133**	-.134**
6						.690**	.505**	.550**	.837**
7							.398**	.439**	.747**
8								.472**	.817**
9									.757**
10									1

Note: 1 = Agency for learning; 2 = intentionality; 3 = forethought; 4 = self-regulation; 5 = self-efficacy; 6 = reading proficiency; 7 = listening proficiency; 8 = writing proficiency; 9 = speaking proficiency; 10 = overall English proficiency; **. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed); *. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Furthermore, multiple-linear regression was conducted to find out if Thai EFL learners' agency for learning had predictive roles on their proficiency. The results indicated that Thai EFL learners' proficiency could be predicted by their agency for learning ($F(2, 387) = 5.00, p = .03, R^2 = .013$), self-regulation ($F(2, 387) = 4.25, p = .04, R^2 = .011$), and self-efficacy ($F(2, 387) = 57.10, p = .01, R^2 = .018$). The learners' agency for learning could also predict their speaking ($F(2, 387) = 6.99, p = .01, R^2 = .018$) and writing proficiency ($F(2, 387) = 4.48, p = .04, R^2 = .011$). Self-efficacy was a significant predictor of reading ($F(2, 387) = 4.51, p = .03, R^2 = .012$), speaking ($F(2, 387) = 6.99, p = .01, R^2 = .018$), and writing ($F(2, 387) = 4.48, p = .04, R^2 = .011$) proficiency too. Forethought could predict the learners' speaking proficiency ($F(2, 387) = 5.01, p = .03, R^2 = .013$). However, intentionality failed to predict the learners' proficiency in overall and specific skills, whereas self-regulation was not a significant predictor of the learners' proficiency in specific skills. In addition, this study also

performed mediation analyses to investigate if the learners' agency for learning could be mediated with proficiency by any agentic properties; the outcomes suggested no potential mediators.

DISCUSSION

This study primarily explored the profiles, differences, and roles of learners' agency for learning among Thai EFL learners with different gender, year of study, and proficiency. In essence, two major findings can be learned from this study. First, Thai EFL learners had a high level of agency for their learning, implying that they possessed the capacity to exercise their agency as planners (intentionality), forethinkers (forethought), self-regulators (self-regulation), and self-examiners (self-efficacy). Female and male learners had the same level of agency, yet their years of study did make a significant difference in their agency level in learning. In this study, first-year students reported higher levels of agency than those in their second year of academic study. The superiority was also reflected in their capacity as forethinkers and self-examiners. At this point, this study suggests that learners at different stages of learning may have different levels of agency for learning and the levels may fluctuate following their personal learning experience. An empirical study from Jääskelä et al. (2020), who analyzed student agency in higher education, uncovered that the potential of student agency analytics may differ in some areas, yet it can be bridged through students' self-reflection, academic advising, and teachers' pedagogical knowledge. Besides, understanding learners' profiles of agency for learning, especially prior to the start of teaching, can offer opportunities for teachers to identify the sources of low levels of agency and develop an instructional plan, which can aid agency building among learners throughout the course (Jääskelä et al., 2017).

Further, this study also found that A1 level learners informed a significantly higher level of agency for learning than A2 learners; the levels of A1 level learners' self-efficacy were significantly higher than those in A2 and B1. From this finding, there seems to be a discrepancy between learners' agency as self-examiners and their actual ability in terms of English proficiency. Preceding research has confirmed a positive correlation (e.g., Kitikanan & Sasimonton, 2017; Zheng et al., 2017) and no correlation (e.g., Tseng, 2013) between learners' self-efficacy and English proficiency. The finding of the present study sustains the latter. Moreover, Heilala et al. (2019) advise that identifying different levels of students' agency can be beneficial for teachers since the knowledge can help provide more personalized support. In this instance, the current study has identified a higher level of agency for learning among A1 students than those of A2 and B1, which means that despite having a higher level of proficiency, A2 and B1 may still need personalized support from teachers.

To discuss these first findings, it is important to review the substantial meaning of agency and how it is interpreted in the context of learning because the body of the literature still lacks empirical studies highlighting the profiles and differences of EFL learners' agency for learning. In a broad term, Martin et al. (2003) refer agency to, "the freedom of individual human beings to make choices and to act on these choices in ways that make a difference in their lives" (p.1). They further argue that humans need the conception of agency within themselves; otherwise, they will be difficult to act

autonomously creative and become active contributors to their own lives and destinies. Meanwhile, in the context of agency for learning (AFL), agency appears in the form of how personal and social aspects of learners affect their ways to regulate, control, and monitor their learning (Code, 2010). Such capacity generates intentional actions to attain desired outcomes and circumstances, resulting in the interactions of the four agentic properties including intentionality, forethought, self-regulation, and self-efficacy. From these perspectives, the first finding of this study can be interpreted that Thai EFL learners have the required capacity to make choices and act purposively to achieve their learning goals; nevertheless, the differences by year of study and proficiency indicate that the learners need follow-up assistance from the so-called 'socializing agents' such as from parents, teachers, peers, and coaches (Zimmerman, 2000), so that their level of agency can maintain stability at a high level of increasing year of study and proficiency level. Learners' agency has also been confirmed to be the mediator between learner autonomy and identity (Korhonen, 2014).

Secondly, this study found that all the four agentic properties were closely related and had strong connections to agency for learning. Similarly, the learners' proficiency in each English skill was associated with their overall proficiency. Nonetheless, learners' agency for learning and overall proficiency were negatively, but weakly correlated. With regards to predictive roles, Thai EFL learners' agency for learning was a significant predictor of their overall proficiency; their agency in self-regulation and self-efficacy could also predict their overall proficiency. Nevertheless, despite the significance, these predictors could only explain a small percentage of the outcomes in Thai EFL learners' proficiency. When proceeded further with mediation analysis, no potential mediators were also found. In this instance, this second finding does not fully sustain the argument that learners' agency for learning plays a significant role in English proficiency. To date, previous studies have indicated the roles of learners' agency on student engagement (Reeve & Tseng, 2011) and impact on learning (Taub et al., 2020) and the present study adds to the understanding that learners' agency has a weak relationship and predictive role on EFL learners' proficiency levels. The findings of the present study also lend support to Code's Agency for Learning model (2010, 2020).

Implication of the Study

The findings of this study are implicated in teachers' further assistance to enhance students' agency for learning to realize a better improvement in English proficiency. EFL teachers in Thailand should take note that the students basically possess a high level of agency for learning, but their success in achieving a higher level of English proficiency, which is one of their EFL learning goals, will likely depend on further assistance from their teachers, peers, and parents. Before learners are engaged with EFL learning resources, their level of agency for learning is the initial indicator of how they will take actions in a particular learning context (Mercer, 2012). To have learners make the most use of provided learning opportunities, developing a sense of agency and connection to their actions among learners is the initial stage (Gremmo & Riley, 1995; Murray, 1999). Practically, EFL teachers in Thailand can design a learning instruction that involves regular consultation hours with students, peer-work collaborations, and

parent participation. Such an instruction can improve students' agentic properties, which are essential in the development of autonomous learning, self-regulated learning, and learning engagement in English learning (e.g., Cleary, 2006; Gao, 2013; Jackson, 2002; Yashima, 2012; Waluyo, 2020).

Teachers should provide regularly personalized supports to students in and outside the classroom. The concept of agency for learning recognizes the influence of personal and social aspects on students' abilities in regulating, controlling, and monitoring their learning (Code, 2010). In other words, personalized supports should focus on conversations that can make students reflect on themselves and all people involved in their English learning environment. The supports can be carried out through face-to-face meetings or using technology-mediated video conferences. Several preceding studies have pointed out that personalized supports in the form of academic advising shape mutual interactions that involve curriculum, pedagogy, and students' learning outcomes (Jääskelä et al., 2020; Gavriushenko et al., 2017; Waluyo, 2019b). Recently, Stenalt (2020) discovered that students' agency interactions were closely related to their grades and participation patterns.

CONCLUSION

To sum up, Thai EFL learners reported a higher level of agency for learning, which indicated that they had the capacity to be agents of planners, forethinkers, self-regulators, and self-examiners for their learning with significant differences by year of study and proficiency level. Their agency for learning was weakly, negatively associated with their English proficiency, but could explain a small percentage of variance in the outcome variable. There were no potential mediators observed among the variables of interests. As the limitations, it is important to acknowledge that this study only attained a small number of B1 level students which might have caused some effect on the statistical analyses. The data in this study relied primarily on a self-reported questionnaire, which there was a possibility that the students randomly completed the questionnaire without being subconsciously aware of the meanings of the questionnaire items; therefore, further research utilizing qualitative data, e.g., interview and focus group discussion, is strongly recommended to see if there are different outcomes that emerge. As much as this study desires to offer, the findings may or may not be generalizable to other EFL contexts in other countries; yet, they add a contribution to the limited number of empirical studies on the roles of agency for learning in the EFL context.

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