Thai Undergraduate and Graduate Students' Perceptions Towards Effective English Teacher Attributes

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Abstract

This study investigated effective English teacher attributes perceived by 125 Thai undergraduates and graduates in terms of five categories, namely rapport, delivery, fairness, knowledge and credibility, and organization and preparation. Descriptive and inferential statistics were used to rate and compare the responses of the undergraduate and graduate groups obtained through a 42-item questionnaire with a 7-point Likert scale. The results indicated both similarities and differences to some extent. While both groups placed rapport the highest rank, followed by organization and preparation, delivery was rated the lowest. The two groups, however, ranked fairness and knowledge and credibility in the opposite order. Graduates considered knowledge and credibility to be more important than fairness, and vice versa. Nine attributes were found to be significantly different between the two groups. While undergraduates weighed using Thai selectively, treating all students fairly, and preparing

students well for exams more importantly, graduates favored teaching grammar, asking individual students to answer questions, requiring students to work hard during class, teachers' having a good knowledge of grammar and vocabulary, and explaining the instructional methods to the class more. These findings are useful for university English teachers to understand their students' expectations in order to help their students at different levels reach their true potential in English learning.

1. INTRODUCTION

Factors influencing student learning have long attracted the attention of English language teaching (ELT) researchers. As an inseparable part of ELT, English teachers play an important role in facilitating their students' success in English learning. Equally important, as the main component of the classrooms, are students' involvement and their choices regarding learning which ought to be taken into consideration (Nunan, 1999). Examining students' perceptions of what shapes effective English teachers, thus, can help teachers understand why students behave the way they do and present a clearer understanding of classroom life (Hall, 2011). Awareness of student perceptions of effective teacher attributes at different levels can help teachers identify their students' specific needs and expectations. As suggested by Nunan and Lamb (2000), teachers' familiarity with types of learners, appropriate context and environment of the instructional process abets the guidance of students through a gradual learning process.

The concept of effective language teacher attributes has been posited by scholars such as Brown (2000), Harmer (2013) and Scrivener (2011). Moreover, a number of studies were conducted to investigate specifications of effective language teacher attributes (Barnes & Lock, 2010, 2013; Borg, 2006; Brosh, 1996; Celik et al., 2013; Faranda & Clarke, 2004; Othman et al., 2016; Park & Lee, 2006; Sommere et al., 2018). In Thailand researchers have examined the issue of effective English teacher attributes (Chanmanee, 2018; Chen, 2012; Kwangsawad, 2017; Meksophawannagul, 2015; Phothongsunan, 2016; Saiyood, 2016;

Wichadee, 2010), but none was found to compare perspectives of Thai undergraduate and graduate students towards effective English teacher attributes.

Given the absence of research in this context, investigating what Thai university students at different levels of study perceive as attributes of effective English teachers seemed crucial. As students are valuable resources in the classroom, their perceptions are essential data for teachers to understand what attributes are expected of them, thus helping them in adjusting their teaching practices to better meet their students' needs. Moreover, in this study, a better theoretical understanding of effective English teacher attributes was hoped to be gained and further explored. The research question formulated in this study was "What are Thai undergraduate and graduate students' perceptions of effective English teacher attributes?"

2. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

2.1 Cultural values and learning in Thailand

On large-scale cultural values, four specific aspects pertinent to higher education in Thailand proposed by Gunawan (2016) are power distance, collectivism, femininity, and avoidance of uncertainty. In respect to power distance, teachers are usually perceived as knowledge givers. They are often highly revered. In terms of collectivism, although Thai students put an emphasis on group importance, they avoid conflict by not introducing their needs and opinions in group discussions. For femininity, students, both male and female, present themselves politely and quietly. Lastly, to avoid uncertainty, Thai students pay close attention and follow all instructions given by teachers.

Understanding classroom culture can be key to effective English language teaching. Following the small culture approach to accept that each classroom has its own culture, Raktham (2012) conducted a study with a university class of 40 second-year English major students and found that while some student behavior coincided with Thai national cultural characteristics, other patterns of behavior deviated from commonly held beliefs about Thai students' behavior. The students

mutually and socially constructed certain types of behavior and activities which formed a part of the cultural makeup of their own classroom.

2.2 Effective language teacher attributes

Throughout the years, scholars have come up with different lists of effective language teacher attributes. Brown's (2000) list of eight attributes includes a knowledge of the theoretical foundations of language learning and language teaching, the analytical skills necessary for assessing different teaching contexts and classroom conditions, an awareness of alternative teaching techniques and the ability to put these into practice, the confidence and skills to alter their teaching techniques as needed, practical experience with different techniques, informed knowledge of themselves and their students, interpersonal communication skills, and attitudes of flexibility and openness to change.

Basing his work on Carl Roger's, the American psychologist, Scrivener (2011) proposes that three core teacher characteristics namely respect, empathy, and authenticity, are key, and that teachers equipped with them are likely to have an influence that is stronger and deeper, and communication between people much more open and honest.

Richards and Farrell (2011) state that teaching a successful language lesson involves teachers' knowing what and how to teach as well as creating the right kind of classroom environment for a successful lesson. Harmer (2013) further points out that the way teachers work in lessons, and the interaction they have with their students, contribute to their students' successful learning. Besides rapport, Harmer claims that starting as they mean to go on, knowing what they are going to do, planning for engagement, prioritizing success, equality rules, and praising instead of blaming are teacher attributes that can ensure a positive class atmosphere.

The review of literature illustrates that measures of effective teachers are a multidimensional complex process. Researchers offer different viewpoints of effective teacher attributes, and various specifications of effective teacher attributes are classified. Though the attribute categories are named differently, generally they overlap one

another, and they are universal in the sense that they reflect what is essential for teachers to possess.

In an attempt to identify effective language teacher attributes perceived by language teachers and students in the Israeli educational system, Brosh (1996) came up with four domains, namely knowledge and command of the target language, ability to organize, explain, and clarify, and fairness and availability to students.

In the analysis of their interview data, Faranda and Clarke (2004) were able to determine five criteria common across effective teachers. Firstly, rapport refers to the degree to which teachers are open and accessible to students. Secondly, delivery covers teachers' effective communication skills and the delivery of pedagogical methods with passion. Thirdly, fairness refers to the fairness in teacher evaluation of students. Fourthly, knowledge and creditability refers to teachers' general intelligence and expertise in the subject they teach. Lastly, organization and preparation cover issues such as relating to class preparation, lesson organization, and prompt return of feedback.

Borg (2006) conducted a study with 200 practicing and prospective language teachers from a range of contexts to define language teachers' distinctiveness. The six factors most commonly referred to in the respondents' accounts are the nature of the subject, the content of teaching, methodology, teacher-learner relationships, non-native issues, and teachers' characteristics. It was pointed out that "discussions of significance will need to be grounded in the analyses of particular language teaching contexts" (Borg, 2006, p. 25).

Another study by Park and Lee (2006) investigated Korean high school teachers using a self-report questionnaire consisting of three components of effective teachers: English proficiency, pedagogical knowledge, and socio-affective skills. Subsequent studies, however, used some variations in the terms Park and Lee used. While "professional skills" (Celik et al., 2013), "knowledge and use of language" (Othman et al., 2016), and "subject matter knowledge" (Sommere et al., 2018), were used instead of "English proficiency", "pedagogy-specific knowledge (Celik et al., 2013), "presentation" (Sommere et al, 2018) "teaching method: knowledge and skill" (Othman et al., 2016) were used for "pedagogical knowledge",

and "personality" (Othman et al., 2016), "partnership" (Sommere et al., 2018) were used for "socio-affective skills".

Barnes and Lock (2010) used Faranda and Clarke's (2004) five category framework to organize a list of effective teacher attributes identified in the studies reviewed and used the list to analyze the perceptions of Korean EFL university students. Barnes and Lock pointed out that in their course of reviewing literature, these five categories seemed to apply to the attributes uncovered by other researchers. First year EFL Korean students were asked to write about the attributes of effective EFL lecturers, and the analysis of the responses produced a list of 40 attributes of effective EFL lecturers.

In 2013, Barnes and Lock conducted a quantitative follow-up to test the values the students placed on the list of effective teacher attributes. The 42-item questionnaire based on the attributes listed in the 2010 study was validated and piloted before administration, and the findings confirmed the identified attributes. The data analysis showed that 40 out of 42 attributes were considered important.

To conclude, a review of literature indicates a variety of categories concerning effective language teacher attributes. As there are different notions of the attributes, to fulfill the aim of this study, the study confined itself to the categories of attributes listed in Barnes and Lock (2010, 2013), which was based on Faranda and Clarke's (2004) framework.

2.3 Studies on effective English teacher attributes in Thailand

Only a few studies were found investigating perspectives of Thai university students towards effective English teacher attributes. In 2012, Chen conducted a study with Thai university students by grouping teacher attributes into two main themes: personal trait-related characteristics and classroom teaching-related characteristics. Generally, teachers' personal qualities were important. Specifically, students emphasized the importance of teachers' kindness. For classroom-related characteristics, successful ways and techniques of lesson delivery and classroom atmosphere creation were expected by more than half of the students.

Another study was conducted by Saiyood (2016) on perceptions of university English major and non-major students. The interview data indicated that both groups perceived ability to explain clearly, knowledge of the subject matter, ability to entertain students, ability to motivate students to learn, ability to teach, fairness, and a sense of humor to be important. The two groups, however, listed the top five effective EFL teacher attributes both similarly and differently to some extent. Explaining clearly, entertaining, and having good teaching methods are somewhat similar, while having fairness and sense of humor and creating a classroom atmosphere were perceived differently.

Lastly, Phothongsunan (2016) examined Thai EFL learners' attitudes towards native and non-native English speaking teachers and found significantly different perceptions in many areas, namely teaching methods and styles, understanding of students' problems, grading and marking, language proficiency, personality, classroom behavior and discipline, and the ability to communicate and interact with learners. Favorable traits of both native and Thai English teachers were, however, related more to personality rather than academic skills.

More evidence of research studies could be found comparing perspectives of teachers and students on effective English teacher attributes. However, the only study conducted confining to Faranda and Clarke's (2004) five attribute categories is that of Meksophawannagul (2015). University teacher and student perceptions on effective English teaching were investigated. Students were found to rank rapport as the highest, followed by organization and preparation, delivery, and fairness, and knowledge and credibility attributes. Teachers perceived organization and preparation as the first rank, followed by rapport, fairness, knowledge, and creditability and delivery. Specifically, students weighed having a positive attitude towards them and being helpful and generous, caring about them, well-prepared lessons, and providing fun activities more importantly.

Another research study was carried out by Wichadee (2010) using a 33-item questionnaire based on four main attribute categories of effective English teachers, namely, English proficiency, pedagogical knowledge, organization and communication skills, and socio-affective skills, to investigate university students' and teachers' perspectives. The

results indicated that while students placed organization and communication skills the most important, teachers placed English proficiency the highest. Wichadee concluded that students preferred English teachers with good preparation, effective communication ability, and a pleasant personality.

A more recent study by Chanmanee (2018) investigating high school teachers and students' perceptions, put effective teacher attributes into three components: English proficiency, pedagogical knowledge, and socio-affective skills. The results indicated that while teachers and students perceived the three main skills to be important for effective English teachers, they ranked them differently. Teachers ranked socio-affective skills the highest, but students ranked pedagogical knowledge skills top. Interestingly, among the attributes under pedagogical knowledge skills, students weighed assigning homework less important.

A more elaborated study involving a comparison of the perceptions of three groups of stakeholders in a pre-service teacher education program was conducted by Kwangsawad (2017). Two sets of questionnaires with different attributes were used. The one for students includes effective teachers, teacher-student relationship, teachers' physical appearance, teachers' knowledge, and teachers' pedagogy and classroom management, and the other for pre-service teachers and school administrators includes teachers' knowledge, characteristics of good teaches, teachers' interpersonal skills, teachers' classroom management techniques, teachers' pedagogical approaches, and teachers' professional attributes. The results of the top three categories indicated different rank orders among the three groups. Students placed teachers' knowledge as the top rank, followed by teacher-student relationship and EFL teacher attributes. Pre-service teachers and school administrators placed teachers' professional attributes as the top rank. However, while pre-service teachers perceived teachers' pedagogical approaches as the second rank, followed by teachers' characteristics, school administrators placed teachers' interpersonal skills before pedagogical approaches.

As can be seen, none of the studies was found to compare the perceptions of university students at different levels. These previous studies mainly focused on the perceptions of students or a comparison between different groups of students or between teachers and students. Given the concerns, this study seeks to further contribute to the literature by investigating a context not fully assessed, exploring variables in terms of university students at different levels. The perspectives found in this study will be beneficial to both teachers and students. Teachers will be aware of different expectations from different levels of students, thus they can adjust their pedagogical practices to meet the attributes most valued and to put less emphasis on those less valued. Meeting their students· needs appropriate for a specific teaching context can help teachers create positive and productive learning classroom atmosphere.

3. METHODOLOGY

3.1 Participants

The study was conducted at a public university in central Thailand. Through convenience sampling, the data were collected from a total of 125 students (48 males and 77 females) from two levels of study: 61 third-year undergraduate students and 64 master·s degree students. All were enrolled in the required English courses at the university. Of the 125 respondents, 75 (60%) rated themselves average in their English ability, 49 (39.2%) rated themselves as below average and only 1 (0.08%) rated themselves as above average.

3.2 Research instrument

A quantitative research design was adopted using Barnes and Lock·s (2013) questionnaire to collect the data. As previously mentioned, the questionnaire resulted from their 2010 qualitative study. Barnes and Lock stated that most of the attributes identified by the students in the qualitative study were perceived importance in the 2013 quantitative study. Moreover, the reliability of the questionnaire was found in the

study to be quite sound overall. In this study, the questionnaire was written in Thai to ensure the respondents' full understanding. The questionnaire consisted of two parts. The first part collected information concerning the respondents' background information. The second part consisted of 42 items of effective teacher attributes. The respondents were asked to rate each attribute item based on the importance they placed on seven alternative points from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree).

3.3 Data collection and analysis

The data collected was analyzed by comparing means and standard deviations between the two independent groups using an independent two-sample t-test. The means scores above 4 indicate positive responses (Barnes & Lock, 2013). The internal consistency index using Cronbach's Alpha was found reliable at 0.97.

4. RESULTS

Table 1

Means, Standard Deviations, and Rank Orders of Respondents' Perceptions Regarding Five Categories of Attributes

Category	Undergraduates (n=61)			Graduates (n=64)		
	M	S.D.	Rank	M	S.D.	Rank
1 Rapport	6.29	0.97	1	6.25	0.97	1
2 Delivery	5.77	1.29	5	5.84	1.31	5
3 Fairness	5.89	1.27	3	5.88	1.21	4
4 Knowledge and Credibility	5.79	1.14	4	6.07	1.18	3
5 Organization and Preparation	5.99	1.08	2	6.23	0.90	2
	5.95	1.19		6.02	1.17	

According to Table 1, both undergraduate and graduate students placed rapport as the most important category (M = 6.29, SD = 0.97 and M = 6.25,

SD = 0.97), followed by the organization and preparation category (M = 5.99, SD = 1.08 and M = 6.23, SD = 0.90). The two groups also rated delivery as the lowest important category (M = 5.77, SD = 1.29 and M = 5.84, SD = 1.31). The rank orders of the mean scores of fairness and knowledge and credibility categories between the two groups were, however, in opposition. Undergraduate students perceived fairness (M = 5.89, SD = 1.27) to be more important than knowledge and credibility (M = 5.79, SD = 1.14), and vice versa (M = 5.88, SD = 1.21 and M = 6.07, SD = 1.18). No statistically significant difference for the overall means and standard deviations of all five categories between the two groups was found.

Data from each individual teacher attribute revealed that both groups rated understanding the different student levels under the rapport category (Item 10: M = 6.84, SD = 0.42 and M = 6.78, SD = 0.52) the highest in importance and asking individual students to answer questions under the delivery category (Item 27: M = 3.43, SD = 1.18 and M = 4.16, SD = 1.87) the least important. Nearly all attributes in the questionnaire were considered positively important by both groups except asking individual students to answer questions (Item 27: M = 3.43, SD = 1.18), which was perceived negatively by the undergraduate group. Tables 2 to 6 present the results under each of the five categories.

Table 2

Means, Standard Deviations, and Rank Orders of Respondents'
Perceptions Regarding Rapport Attributes

	Effective Thai ELT teachers	Undergraduates (n=61)			Graduates (n=64)		
		M	S.D.	Rank	M	S.D.	Rank
1	are friendly.	6.46	0.70	7	6.30	0.75	7
2	develop good relationships with students.	6.56	0.67	4	6.45	0.66	6
3	share personal experiences.	5.74	1.01	10	5.77	1.23	9
4	care about students.	6.56	0.62	5	6.48	0.69	5
5	are patient.	6.33	0.83	8	6.28	1.03	8
6	listen to students.	6.51	0.60	6	6.55	0.64	4

7	have a positive attitude in general.	6.72	0.58	3	6.61	0.66	3
8	have charisma.	4.79	1.20	11	5.11	1.10	11
9	understand the students' English education background.	6.79	0.45	2	6.67	0.56	2
10	understand the different student levels.	6.84	0.42	1	6.78	0.52	1
11	have a sense of humor.	5.92	0.13	9	5.70	1.03	10
	Rapport	6.29	0.97		6.25	0.97	

As can be seen from Table 2, while both groups perceived understanding the different student levels (Item 10: M = 6.84, SD = 0.42 and M = 6.78, SD = 0.52) followed by understanding the students' English education background (Item 9: M = 6.79, SD = 0.45 and M = 6.67, SD = 0.56) and having a positive attitude in general (Item 7: M = 6.72, SD = 0.58 and M = 6.61, SD = 0.66) as the top three rapport attributes, they placed having charisma (Item 8: M = 4.79, SD = 1.20 and M = 5.11, SD = 1.10) the least important. Caring about students (Item 4: M = 6.56, SD = 0.62 and M = 6.48, SD = 0.69) was perceived to be important at the same rank by both groups. Although at different rank orders, the two groups also perceived developing good relationships with students (Item 2: M = 6.56, SD = 0.67 and M = 6.45, SD = 0.66) and listening to students (Item 6: M = 6.51, SD = 0.60 and M = 6.55, SD = 0.64) to be very important. The attributes of being friendly (Item 1: M = 6.46, SD = 0.70 and M = 6.30, SD = 0.75) and being patient (Item 5: M = 6.33, SD = 0.83 and M = 6.28, SD = 1.03) were perceived at the same rank orders but with less important perceptions. Lastly, both groups perceived sharing personal experiences (Item 3: M = 5.74, SD = 1.01 and M = 5.77, SD = 1.23) and having a sense of humor (Item 11: M = 5.92, SD = 0.13 and M = 5.70, SD = 1.03) less important although at different rank orders.

Table 3 shows that the two groups placed giving clear explanations (Item13: M = 6.72, SD = 0.49 and M = 6.69, SD = 0.66) followed by using good examples (Item 14: M = 6.67, SD = 0.51 and M = 6.66, SD = 0.65) as the top two delivery attributes. Asking individual students to answer questions (Item 27: M = 3.43, SD = 1.18 and M = 4.16, SD = 1.87) was

Table 3

Means, Standard Deviations, and Rank Orders of Respondents' Perceptions Regarding Delivery Attributes

	Effective Thai ELT teachers	Undergraduates (n=61)			Graduates (n=64)		
		M	S.D.	Rank	M	S.D.	Rank
12	are enthusiastic about ELT.	6.36	0.68	5	6.42	0.71	3
13	give clear explanations.	6.72	0.49	1	6.69	0.66	1
14	use good examples.	6.67	0.51	2	6.66	0.65	2
15	use a variety of teaching methods.	6.11	0.90	6	6.28	0.92	5
16	use Thai selectively.**	5.75	1.40	10	5.19	1.62	10
17	correct writing errors.	6.57	0.69	3	6.38	0.90	4
18	correct speaking errors.	6.43	0.78	4	6.27	0.91	6
19	teach grammar.**	5.90	1.11	8	6.22	0.90	7
20	use group work.	5.44	1.40	14	5.38	1.18	14
21	encourage student participation in class.	5.87	0.78	9	6.08	0.96	9
22	encourage participation of students with low confidence.	6.08	1.04	7	6.18	0.90	8
23	talk slowly in English.	5.61	1.32	11	5.97	1.12	11
24	use easy words.	5.57	1.36	12	5.39	1.26	12
25	ask questions frequently.	4.84	1.08	16	5.08	1.37	16
26	ask questions then wait for volunteers to answer.	5.16	1.07	15	5.21	1.45	15
27	ask individual students to answer questions.*	3.43	1.18	17	4.16	1.87	17
28	give students plenty of time to answer questions.	5.56	1.07	13	5.71	1.16	13
	Delivery	5.77	1.29		5.84	1.31	

* $p < 0.01$ ** $p < 0.05$

perceived the least important. Graduate students, however, perceived this attribute to be significantly more important than undergraduates at the 0.01 level ($t(121) = -2.600$, $p = 0.005$). Although at different rank orders, the two groups perceived being enthusiastic about ELT (Item 12: M = 6.36, SD = 0.68 and M = 6.42, SD = 0.71), using a variety of teaching methods

(Item 15: M = 6.11, SD = 0.90 and M = 6.28, SD = 0.92), correcting writing errors (Item 17: M = 6.57, SD = 0.69 and M = 6.38, SD = 0.90), correcting speaking errors (Item 18: M = 6.43, SD = 0.78 and M = 6.27, SD = 0.91), teaching grammar (Item 19: M = 5.90, SD = 1.11 and M = 6.22, SD = 0.90), and encouraging participation of students with low confidence (Item 22: M = 6.08, SD = 1.04 and M = 6.18, SD = 0.90) to be important. It can also be noticeable from the table that graduate students perceived teaching grammar to be significantly more important than undergraduate students at the 0.05 level ($t(123) = -1.763, p = 0.040$).

With less important perceptions, the attributes of using Thai selectively (Item 16: M = 5.75, SD = 1.40 and M = 5.19, SD = 1.62), talking slowly in English (Item 23: M = 5.61, SD = 1.32 and M = 5.97, SD = 1.12), using easy words (Item 24: M = 5.57, SD = 1.36 and M = 5.39, SD = 1.26), giving students plenty of time to answer questions (Item 28: M = 5.56, SD = 1.07 and M = 5.71, SD = 1.16), using group work (Item 20: M = 5.44, SD = 1.40 and M = 5.38, SD = 1.18), asking questions then wait for volunteers to answer (Item 26: M = 5.16, SD = 1.07 and M = 5.21, SD = 1.45) and asking questions frequently (Item 25: M = 4.84, SD = 1.08 and M = 5.08, SD = 1.37) were perceived by both groups at the same rank orders. As seen from the table, undergraduate students perceived using Thai selectively more significantly important than graduate students at the 0.05 level ($t(123) = 2.087, p = 0.019$).

Table 4

Means, Standard Deviations, and Rank Orders of Respondents'
Perceptions Regarding Fairness Attributes

	Effective Thai ELT teachers	Undergraduates (n=61)			Graduates (n=64)		
		M	S.D.	Rank	M	S.D.	Rank
29	treat all students fairly.**	6.70	0.59	1	6.45	0.74	1
30	prepare students well for exams.**	6.51	0.79	3	6.19	0.88	3
31	give students clear grading guidelines.	6.52	0.72	2	6.45	0.74	2

32	require students to work hard during class.**	4.75	1.23	5	5.19	1.32	4
33	require students to do homework.	4.95	1.22	4	5.10	1.41	5
	Fairness	5.89	1.27		5.88	1.21	

*p< 0.01   **p< 0.05

As shown in Table 4, treating all students fairly was ranked by both groups as the highest important fairness attribute (Item 29: M = 6.70, SD = 0.59 and M = 6.45, SD = 0.74), followed by giving students clear grading guidelines (Item 31: M = 6.52, SD = 0.72 and M = 6.45, SD = 0.74) and preparing students well for exams (Item30: M = 6.51, SD = 0.79 and M = 6.19, SD = 0.88). Undergraduate students perceived treating all student fairly and preparing them well for exams significantly higher than graduate students at the 0.05 level ($t(121)$ = 2.102, p = 0.019 and $t(121)$ = 2.083, p = 0.020).

The rank orders of the mean scores of the attributes of requiring students to work hard during class and requiring students to do homework between the two groups were, however, in opposition. Undergraduate students perceived requiring students to do homework (Item 33: M = 4.95, SD = 1.22) to be more important than requiring students to work hard during class (Item 32: M = 4.75, SD = 1.23) and vice versa (Item 32: M = 5.19, SD = 1.32 and Item 33 = 5.10, SD = 1.41). Graduate students perceived requiring students to work hard during class significantly higher than graduate students at the 0.05 level ($t(121)$ = -1.910, p = 0.029).

Table 5

*Means, Standard Deviations, and Rank Orders of Respondents'
Perceptions Regarding Knowledge and Credibility Attributes*

	Effective Thai ELT teachers	Undergraduates (n=61)			Graduates (n=64)		
		M	S.D.	Rank	M	S.D.	Rank
34	are well qualified for ELT.	5.36	1.34	3	5.34	1.38	3

		M	S.D.	Rank	M	S.D.	Rank
35	have a good knowledge of grammar.*	5.85	1.00	2	6.32	1.02	2
36	have a good knowledge of vocabulary.*	6.16	0.90	1	6.56	0.67	1
	Knowledge and Credibility	5.79	1.14		6.07	1.18	

*p< 0.01   **p< 0.05

The three attributes under knowledge and credibility shown in Table 5 were perceived by both groups in the same rank orders as follows: having a good knowledge of vocabulary (Item 36: M = 6.16, SD = 0.90 and M = 6.56, SD = 0.67), having a good knowledge of grammar (Item 35: M = 5.85, SD = 1.00 and M = 6.32, SD = 1.02), and being well qualified for ELT (Item 34: M = 5.36, SD = 1.34 and M = 5.34, SD = 1.38). The table, however, shows significant differences at the 0.01 level between the two groups in Items 35 and 36 ($t(121) = -2.583$, $p = 0.005$ and $t(120) = -2.741$, $p = 0.004$). Graduate students perceived both having a good knowledge of grammar and vocabulary to be more important.

Table 6

Means, Standard Deviations, and Rank Orders of Respondents' Perceptions Regarding Organization and Preparation Attributes

	Effective Thai ELT teachers	Undergraduates (n=61)			Graduates (n=64)		
		M	S.D.	Rank	M	S.D.	Rank
37	are well prepared every lesson.	6.43	0.72	1	6.56	0.64	1
38	provide a syllabus detailing weekly course content.	6.03	1.05	3	6.27	0.81	3
39	explain the instructional methods to the class.**	5.80	1.09	5	6.19	0.92	4
40	tell students the lesson objectives each lesson.	6.10	1.00	2	6.29	0.84	2
41	stick to the syllabus.	5.93	1.14	4	6.08	0.98	5
42	make their own supplemental material.	5.62	1.27	6	5.97	1.04	6

Organization and Preparation	5.99	1.08	6.23	0.90

*$p < 0.01$ **$p < 0.05$

As shown in Table 6, being well prepared every lesson was ranked by both groups as the highest important organization and preparation attribute (Item 37: M = 6.43, SD = 0.72 and M = 6.56, SD = 0.64), followed by telling students the lesson objectives each lesson (Item 40: M = 6.10, SD = 1.00 and M = 6.29, SD = 0.84) and providing a syllabus detailing weekly course content (Item38: M = 6.03, SD = 1.05 and M = 6.27, SD = 0.81). Making their own supplemental material was, however, ranked the lowest (Item 42: M = 5.62, SD = 1.27 and M = 5.97, SD = 1.04). The rank orders of the attributes of explaining the instructional methods to the class and sticking to the syllabus between the two groups were, however, in opposition. Graduate students perceived explaining the instructional methods to the class (Item 39: M = 6.19, SD = 0.92) to be more important than sticking to the syllabus (Item 41: M = 6.08, SD = 0.98) and vice versa (Item 41 = 5.93, SD = 1.14 and Item 39: M = 5.80, SD = 1.09). Moreover, graduate students perceived explaining the instructional methods to the class to be significantly more important at 0.05 level ($t_{(121)}$ = -2.144, p = 0.017).

5. DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS

Overall, it can be concluded that the findings revealed both commonalities and differences between the two groups of students. While there is no significant difference between the two groups in the five attribute categories, two categories, namely knowledge and credibility and fairness, were ranked differently. Undergraduates favored fairness more than knowledge and credibility, and vice versa. Discussion of the results is presented under each of the five categories as follows:

5.1 Rapport

The importance of rapport attributes perceived by both groups as the first rank category is consistent with what was found in

Meksophawannagul's (2015) study. The students in Wichadee's (2010) study placed this category in the second rank. The two groups agreed on the attribute of understanding the different student levels, followed by understanding the students' English educational background as the top two rapport attributes as well as among the 42 attributes. This seems relevant to the Thai university ELT context with multi-level classes. Some less advanced students might need more understanding from teachers.

These findings are consistent with university students' perceptions in Chen's (2012) study. The students liked teachers who could adjust their teaching speed according to student receptive abilities. Also, as found in Wichadee's (2010) study, different English proficiency levels reported different teacher attributes, with the low proficiency group reported wanting the teaching tailored to their level. In the context of Korean students, Barnes and Lock (2013) stated that some Korean students felt that preferential treatment was often given to the most advanced students. Thus, it is recommended that teachers consider students' levels in order to pay more attention to those low-proficient students. For understanding the students' English educational background, it is useful for teachers to know what skills and in what ways students were taught previously, as acquisition takes place when students are exposed to "Comprehensible Input" that belongs to level "i + 1" (Krashen, 1982).

Having a positive attitude as the third rank is somehow in line with students' high perceptions as the first rank of rapport attributes in Meksophawannagul's (2015) study. Similarly, being friendly perceived as a strong attribute was seen among Chen's (2012) university and Chanmanee's (2018) high school students. It is generally accepted that creating appropriate relationship with their students, teachers can develop a good learning environment in the classroom, which can result in productive and successful learning (Harmer, 2013).

Lower rankings were given by both groups to such attributes as having a sense of humor, sharing personal experience, and teachers' charisma. Interestingly, teachers' charisma received the weakest rating by both groups. The low prioritization for having a sense of humor is consistent with what Saiyood (2016) found with her non-English major

students. Meksophawannagul (2015), however, put this attribute under delivery category and found it was perceived as the most important attribute. The lack of importance placed on sense of humor revealed in this study might be related to the fact that humor is culture-bound, lending itself to subjective and therefore multi-faceted perceptions.

For the attributes of sharing personal experiences, students in Chen's (2012) study also claimed that they hoped teachers would not talk about other things that had nothing to do with the subject matter. The reasons both groups perceived these attributes as less important might be because of stress and pressure learning at university levels.

5.2 Organization and preparation

The second rank placed by both groups on organization and preparation attributes is in line with what Meksophawannagul (2015) found in her study. This category was chosen as the first rank by students in Wichadee's (2010) study and as the third rank by non-English major students in Saiyood's (2016) study.

As expected, both groups agreed that being well prepared every lesson is very important, followed by telling students the lesson objectives each lesson, and providing a syllabus detailing weekly content. All these three attributes were also found highly supported in Chen's (2012) and Meksophawannagul's (2015) studies. This is not surprising as in all university courses, a course syllabus is given to students on the first day of class. Barnes and Lock (2013) claim that, "A well-prepared teacher has clear lesson objectives and procedures, and ensures that all the materials are ready and prepared so that each lesson runs smoothly" (p.30). Moreover, Davies and Pearse (2008) suggest that clear definition of appropriate goals will help students feel that every activity teachers do in class, as well as the whole course, is worthwhile and a weekly-content syllabus will allow them to accumulate knowledge and skills in order to learn new things without forgetting old ones. Nunan and Lamb (2000) also encourage teachers to develop goals and objectives appropriately and convey them meaningfully to their students.

Although both groups gave low ratings to sticking to the syllabus and explaining the instructional methods to the class, graduates perceived the latter to be significantly more important than undergraduates. This finding is to be expected as graduate students, being more mature, may be more serious about their studies. They might expect teachers to explain instructional methods so that they can prepare themselves for the lesson. This may be because graduate-level studies involve heavily theoretical journal article assignments requiring precise explanations.

It can also be noticeable from the results that the two groups put less emphasis on teachers, making their own supplemental material. This result is expectable. With the use of digital technologies, students are equipped with an oversupply of continuous information. Though students may prefer to take responsibility for choosing what will best help them learn, teachers can still play an important role, serving as a guide or mentor, not as a "Mr. know it all" who provides students with all their information.

5.3 Knowledge and credibility

As the fourth rank for undergraduates and the third rank for graduates, knowledge and credibility was somewhat in line with the fourth rank the students recorded in Wichadee's (2010) study. Students in Meksophawannagul's (2015) study placed it as the last rank, but English major students in Saiyood's (2016) study placed it as the second rank.

While both groups gave a high degree of support to having a good knowledge of both grammar and vocabulary, graduate students perceived these two attributes as significantly higher in importance. The finding for grammatical knowledge is, however, in contradiction to high school students in Chanmanee's (2018) study who put it as the least emphasis. An explanation for this study might be that graduate students had been taught grammar instruction during their earlier English learning while undergraduate students had been taught with the focus more on building communicative skills. Teachers, having a good knowledge of vocabulary is also expectable as vocabulary knowledge is an element for

all communication skills. It is regarded as an important tool for language learners (Nation, 2001; Schmitt, 2000).

Both groups, however, gave less support for being qualified for ELT. This finding may be indicative of a limited understanding among the students of what being qualified English teachers means. Also, it is common to see Thai English teachers who do not graduate with an English teaching degree.

5.4 Fairness

Fairness attributes were chosen by undergraduates as the fourth rank and graduates as the third rank. The results are approximately in line with where the fourth rank students in Meksophawannagul's (2015) study and non-English major students in Saiyood's (2016) studies placed them.

Treating students fairly was strongly supported by both groups though undergraduate students perceived it significantly more important. This is in line with students' perceptions in Meksophawannagul's (2015) study. The strong importance of giving students clear grading guidelines also comes as no surprise as Thai students at all levels are concerned about their grades. The results of this attribute is also in line with the attribute of preparing students well for exams, which again was perceived as significantly more important among undergraduate students.

It is also not surprising to see both groups perceived the requirements of working hard and doing homework as moderately important as it is very common for Thai teachers to be quite strict and serious in their teaching. Meksophawannagul (2015) and Chanmanee (2018) also found in their studies that assigning homework to students was weighed less importantly. Meksophawannagul, moreover, found it perceived as the least important attribute. This is in line with students in Chen's (2012) study who emphasized lenience and preferred teachers with some flexibility, not too strict and serious in the teaching.

5.5 Delivery

Delivery attributes were perceived as the last rank. Similarly, English major students in Saiyood's (2016) study chose having good teaching methods as the last rank. Non-English major students, however, perceived it in the third rank, the same rank as the students in Meksophawannagul's (2010) study.

Giving clear explanations and using good examples were strongly supported by both groups as the first two highest means in this category. Both undergraduate and graduate students expected teachers to have the ability to deliver the knowledge clearly and meaningfully. These findings were consistent with those of Chanmanee (2018), Chen (2012), and Saiyood (2016).

For lesson content, error correction was well-liked by both groups; for teaching grammar, graduate students perceived it more significantly important than undergraduate students. Hall (2011) noted that, in general, students believe that error correction is a key part of the language teacher's role expected by students. In the Thai context, this is likely because Thai students are mostly taught through traditional methods via memorization, grammar instruction, and error correction. Nunan and Lamb (2000), however, asserted that correcting student errors depends on the focus of the lesson. If the focus is on meaning, teachers can make a note for follow-up treatment; if the focus is on form, teachers could interrupt during the flow of interaction. For teaching grammar, the finding corresponds with what was found in the knowledge and credibility category in terms of teachers' having a good knowledge of grammar mentioned earlier.

Attributes concerning questioning, especially asking individual students to answer questions, were ranked with less support by both groups, and it was perceived the lowest item in mportance among delivery attributes among the 42 attributes. It seems that Thai students don't like to be asked questions no matter whether at the whole class or individually, but undergraduate students showed significantly less preference with the latter. Both groups, however, agreed that if questions are asked, it is fairly important for teachers to give them plenty of time to answer the questions. The negative perceptions among undergraduate students on asking individual students to answer

questions are not surprising as most Thais are culturally afraid of losing face when they make mistakes. Therefore, teachers need to be aware of their students' feeling of anxiety when questions are asked. Questions asked should be answerable and given enough time to respond. It is suggested that teachers need to find the right balance when teaching students at different age levels and in different kinds of instruction in order to help them provide fuller answers, expand their ideas, and more successfully process the material to be learned (Lightbown and Spada (2013). Nunan and Lamb (2000), however, point out that while wait time should be increased in many contexts and situations, sometimes it is unnecessary to do so.

Regarding methodological preferences, being enthusiastic about ELT, using a variety of teaching methods, teaching grammar, encouraging student participation in class, and encouraging participation of students with low confidence were also perceived as quite highly desirable by both groups. Being enthusiastic about ELT and using a variety of teaching methods were also found in Chen's (2012) study. The results of methodological preferences indicate that having good English proficiency is not enough; students expect teachers to know how to teach to help them achieve their learning outcomes. Thus, it is suggested that teachers strengthen their skills in language teaching methods so they can find ways to encourage participation in class, specifically among low confidence students. Participatory modes of instruction, however, seem quite challenging to Thai ELT teachers as the results of this study indicate that Thai university students gave less support to questioning and using group work.

Using group work which was perceived as a less important attribute is in line with what Meksophawannagul (2015) found in her study. Setting up group work activities, thus, needs teachers' special attention. Raktham (2012) reported problems with group work among Thai students in her study. Cohesiveness of the groups was found to hinder the students' successful group-based learning. Valuing the relationship with one another so much, students deliberately withdrew their ideas or were unwilling to challenge other group members' ideas to avoid disagreements or conflicts. According to Nunan and Lamb (2000), pair and group work can be a problem if there is a mismatch between the

expectations of the teacher and his/her students. Nunan and Lamb suggested teachers step back and observe group work tasks in action to gain insights into this problematic issue.

Using Thai selectively, talking slowly in English, and using easy words were perceived as less important. The findings are similar to the students' lower rank orders of perceptions towards language communication in Meksophawannagul's (2015) study. Less importance of using Thai might be because at university, students at both levels expect their teachers to teach English using the language learnt. Also, they might be familiar with Thai teachers' switching back and forth between English and Thai to give brief explanations of grammar and lexis and to explain procedures and routines to facilitate the management of learning (Nunan & Lamb, 2000). Chen (2012), however, reported that students did not favor teachers who spoke and taught very fast and would like to learn with teachers who spoke both English and Thai. Undergraduate students, however, perceived using Thai selectively more importantly than graduate students. This phenomenon probably implied that graduate students, having had experience learning English via English in their undergraduate studies, might feel more comfortable with this approach.

6. CONCLUSIONS

This study investigated effective English teacher attributes as perceived by undergraduate and graduate students in Thailand. Overall, both groups supported what are generally accepted as standard effective teacher attributes. They agreed that rapport attributes were the most important with the highest expectation for teachers to understand different student levels. Delivery attributes came as the least important with the lowest expectation on asking individual students to answer questions.

Undergraduate students, however, preferred teachers to use Thai selectively, treat all students fairly, and prepare students well for exams more than graduate students. Conversely, graduate students gave more support to teaching grammar, asking individual students to answer questions, requiring students to work hard during class, teachers' having

a good knowledge of grammar and vocabulary, and the explanation of the instructional methods to the class.

There is no doubt that teachers play an important role in a language classroom, and what students perceive to be effective teacher attributes differ from one context to another. Teachers, thus, need to know what their students expect from them. Being informed of students' perceptions enables English teachers to adjust their instructional practices to facilitate different groups' needs and learning. The information emerging from the data of this study will also be beneficial for teachers to enhance the attributes most valued by their students and to moderate the attributes less valued or inappropriate for their specific teaching context. There is a clear need for teachers to negotiate students' needs and expectations. The overall results suggested that students at both levels - graduate and undergraduate - long for a positive learning atmosphere which can help them overcome the affective filters interfering with their language acquisition (Krashen, 1982).

There are, however, some limitations for the present study. The data collected in the study might not be representatives for all Thai university students. Further research can be conducted to investigate students from other universities to see if other university undergraduate and graduate students hold the same perceptions as the ones in this study. Moreover, why certain attributes are perceived as more important than others should be further explored.

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