



CEFR-Based Textbook Evaluation: Enhancing Thai Tertiary Students' English Proficiency through a B1 ELT Textbook

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Abstract: The adoption of the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) into Thailand's language education has significantly shaped teaching practices, leading to notable adaptations in ELT textbooks to address emerging challenges. This article presents the findings of an evaluation of *Personal Best B1 Student's Book*, a widely used textbook among Thai ELT tertiary students at the B1 CEFR level. The evaluation employed a localized CEFR-based textbook evaluation checklist encompassing eight evaluation categories: layout, design, and physical makeup; unit organization; content, topics, and language; language teaching methods and activities; four language skills; vocabulary; grammar; and accompanying materials. Overall, the evaluation indicates that the textbook is well-designed and supports Thai ELT students in achieving B1 CEFR proficiency. However, limitations of the textbook were identified, including infrequent reviews, excessive content and activities, and uneven cultural content distribution. The study discusses the strengths and weaknesses of the textbook based on these findings and proposes pedagogical implications for ELT teachers to enhance classroom instruction using this key resource.

Keywords: CEFR-aligned textbook evaluation, Thai tertiary education, Communicative Language Teaching (CLT), teacher adaptation, curriculum planning

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Introduction

In English Language Teaching (ELT) contexts, textbooks are widely recognized as essential instructional materials. Over recent decades, a substantial body of research has examined the suitability and effectiveness of ELT textbooks in enhancing second language (L2) learners' English proficiency (e.g., Abdul Rahim & Jalalian Daghig, 2020; Alharbi, 2015; Nordlund, 2016; Nuangpolmak, 2019). Findings from this line of research underscore the crucial role that textbooks

play in helping L2 English learners meet proficiency benchmarks outlined in national curricula and syllabi (Hamidi et al., 2016; Ulla, 2019; Wuttisrisiriporn et al., 2020).

Since 2014, the integration of the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) into Thailand's language education policy has significantly influenced ELT practices, prompting notable adaptations in textbook design to meet evolving expectations. However, this policy shift has revealed a persistent gap between official expectations and classroom realities. For instance, although the Thai Ministry of Education expects high school graduates to reach B1 proficiency (Wuttisrisiriporn & Usaha, 2019), empirical evidence suggests that many students fall short of this goal upon entering university (Waluyo, 2019). Consequently, Thai universities have developed foundation English courses aligned more closely with students' actual proficiency levels, typically ranging from A2 to B1.

This situation is further complicated by Thailand's parallel adoption of Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) principles alongside CEFR guidelines. The dual implementation of CEFR and CLT presents unique challenges for textbook evaluation, as materials must simultaneously foster communicative competence and support measurable, CEFR-aligned learning outcomes. Within this context, *Personal Best B1 Pre-intermediate Level Student's Book*, published by Richmond International, has been widely adopted across Thai public universities as a core foundation English textbook. Based on our preliminary survey, this textbook was selected for evaluation due to its alignment with the B1 level of the CEFR and its focus on developing adult and young adult learners' skills in reading, listening, speaking, writing, grammar, vocabulary, and communication.

Despite its popularity and widespread use, no comprehensive evaluation has yet assessed the effectiveness of *Personal Best B1* in facilitating students' progression to B1-level proficiency within the CLT framework implemented in Thai universities. This evaluation gap is especially pressing given the specific challenges of Thai ELT contexts, including students' traditionally passive learning styles, teacher-centered classroom practices, and limited exposure to authentic English communication.

The significance of this study extends beyond evaluating a single textbook; it aims to support evidence-based decision-making in Thai higher education. The findings will inform textbook selection processes, guide teachers in developing supplementary and adaptive materials, contribute to the growing literature on CEFR implementation in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) context, and validate evaluation tools tailored to Thai ELT settings.

Accordingly, this study evaluates *Personal Best B1 Student's Book* using a CEFR- and CLT-informed textbook evaluation checklist developed specifically for Thai ELT contexts. The research addresses the following questions:

1. To what extent does *Personal Best B1 Student's Book* support B1-level English proficiency development within the CLT framework adopted in Thai tertiary education?
2. What are the strengths and limitations of *Personal Best B1 Student's Book* in supporting B1-level English proficiency in Thai ELT contexts, and what pedagogical implications arise for its effective implementation?

Literature Review

ELT Textbook Evaluation

The systematic evaluation of ELT textbooks has become a critical component in ensuring effective language instruction and learning outcomes. Tomlinson (2023) defines the primary goal of textbook evaluation as assessing the suitability of selected materials for facilitating language teaching and learning in classroom settings. This evaluative process typically occurs across three temporal stages: pre-use evaluation (forecasting potential impact), in-use evaluation (observing effectiveness during implementation), and post-use evaluation (assessing lasting effects after use) (Ellis, 1998; Tomlinson, 2023; Wuttisrisiriporn et al., 2020).

Given the diversity of educational contexts worldwide, no universally applicable ELT textbook evaluation checklist exists, necessitating the development of context-specific frameworks (Sheldon, 1988). This recognition has prompted the creation of various evaluation instruments over the past two decades. Notable examples include Litz's (2005) 40-item checklist developed for Korean universities, which was later adapted for use in Iran (Khodabakhshi, 2014) and Malaysia (Ahmed, 2016), as well as Gutiérrez-Bermúdez's (2014) CEFR-aligned framework designed for Colombian elementary education.

The emergence of CEFR-aligned evaluation tools marks a significant advancement in textbook assessment. For instance, Wuttisrisiriporn and Usaha (2019) developed a contextually appropriate 5-point Likert scale checklist specifically for Thai ELT settings. This instrument integrates CEFR principles and CLT approaches, emphasizing the development of communicative competence through meaningful interaction and authentic language use (Richards & Rodgers, 2014). Such developments reflect the growing recognition that effective textbook evaluation requires tools that are not only methodologically robust but also culturally and contextually relevant.

ELT Textbook Evaluation in Different ELT Contexts

Evidence from previous empirical studies into ELT textbook evaluation has demonstrated that textbooks play a significant role in language teaching and learning across elementary, secondary, and tertiary levels, while also revealing notable shortcomings. For example, Alharbi's (2015) evaluation of the *Flying High for Saudi Arabia* series found that although many quality criteria were met, critical deficiencies remained in vocabulary development, review sections, and writing tasks.

Similarly, Gutiérrez-Bermúdez's (2014) analysis of *New English File: Elementary* for Colombian A1–A2 learners highlighted strong CEFR alignment but raised concerns about content authenticity and age-appropriateness for younger students.

Cultural representation has emerged as a particularly salient evaluation criterion, especially in secondary-level materials. Abdul Rahim and Jalalian Daghigh's (2020) comparative study of Malaysian ELT textbooks revealed that local publications emphasized source culture content, whereas commercial texts focused more on target cultures—highlighting the delicate balance between promoting cultural relevance and global exposure. This concern is echoed in Ahamat and Kabilan's (2022) study, which found that rural Malaysian elementary teachers frequently adapted CEFR-aligned textbooks to better meet local cultural and learner needs.

Further research has documented persistent design issues in CEFR-aligned secondary textbooks. Demirel and Fakazlı's (2021) comparative analysis of English and Turkish language teaching coursebooks uncovered disparities in the treatment of speaking and writing skills, suggesting that even CEFR-aligned materials may inconsistently address key competencies. These findings underscore the need for comprehensive, skill-specific textbook evaluations rather than reliance solely on framework alignment.

At the tertiary level, studies have identified distinct challenges in ELT materials used in university contexts. Ahmed's (2016) evaluation of Malaysian university textbooks reported sufficient practice in the four core skills but noted inadequate grammar explanations and underdeveloped vocabulary sections. In the Thai context, Nuangpolmak's (2019) analysis of *English Unlimited* found that while the textbook provided practical, integrated activities, it exhibited an imbalance in skills coverage and lacked sufficient grammatical scaffolding, which led to comprehension difficulties among students.

Recent studies have expanded the understanding of textbook effectiveness at the tertiary level by employing diverse methodological approaches. Abdul Aziz and Makhtar's (2021) mixed-methods study on TESL in-service teachers' experiences with oral history workbooks revealed that although the content was innovative, teachers required additional support to implement the material effectively. This highlights the interdependence between textbook design and teacher readiness.

International comparative studies offer further insights. Calafato's (2021) survey of multilingual teaching in Norwegian and Russian classrooms found that teachers frequently struggled to implement prescribed textbooks, particularly due to cultural differences and time constraints—issues that resonate with those in expanding-circle contexts. These parallels suggest that adaptability is a universal concern for higher education ELT materials.

Technology-enhanced textbooks have also attracted attention. Castillo-Cuesta and

Quinonez-Beltran's (2022) study on the use of digital comics for vocabulary instruction during COVID-19 demonstrated that multimedia materials significantly enhanced engagement and learning outcomes when thoughtfully integrated with traditional content. This points to promising directions for future textbook development.

CEFR-Aligned Textbook Studies

Research on CEFR-aligned textbooks continues to reveal both potential and limitations. Fişne et al.'s (2018) cross-cultural comparison of ELT curricula and textbooks in Turkish and Portuguese elementary schools found that, although CEFR principles were embedded in the curricula, actual textbook activities varied in their alignment with A1 descriptors. Portuguese textbooks offered more comprehensive reading and listening tasks, while Turkish textbooks placed greater emphasis on speaking and grammar.

Implementation challenges related to CEFR-aligned materials have been reported across diverse contexts. Zulkipli and Nasri's (2024) systematic review identified three recurring issues: cultural mismatches, diverse learner proficiency levels, and limited instructional time. Their analysis of 13 studies revealed that teachers most commonly addressed these challenges through communication-focused strategies and multimedia integration.

Gopal et al.'s (2023) study on Malaysian lower secondary learners found that while the CEFR framework provided useful assessment benchmarks, textbook difficulty levels often exceeded students' actual proficiency. This suggests that alignment with CEFR does not guarantee material appropriateness for learners.

Other studies have examined the development of specific language skills. Üstünbaş and Ortaçtepe (2016) found that CEFR-aligned textbooks did not adequately support formulaic language use for spoken interaction among Turkish intermediate-level EFL learners. Similarly, Oi's (2018) mixed-methods study comparing writing tasks with CEFR CAN-DO descriptors revealed mismatches between task difficulty and level expectations, pointing to persistent issues with task calibration.

Towns (2020) examined vocabulary selection in CEFR-aligned textbooks and found that many commercial materials failed to meet the lexical needs of EFL learners, necessitating substantial teacher adaptation. This underscores the continuing challenge of developing truly universal CEFR-based textbooks suitable for diverse learner populations.

Collectively, these studies confirm that ELT textbooks exhibit both strengths and limitations that must be systematically identified and addressed throughout the teaching process. While commercial textbooks often provide a solid structural foundation, supplementary materials and teacher adaptation remain essential to meet local learner needs. Despite extensive research across

varied contexts, there remains a significant gap in evaluating CEFR-aligned textbooks specifically used by Thai tertiary students at the B1 level.

This research gap is especially critical given Thailand's strategic emphasis on CEFR integration since 2014 and the continued challenge of students entering university without having attained the expected B1 proficiency level. The need for systematic evaluation of tertiary-level textbooks is amplified by the potential for well-informed material selection to support national goals—namely, improving English proficiency and producing globally competitive graduates. Accordingly, rigorous, researcher-led evaluations of B1-level textbooks used in Thai universities are essential to optimizing ELT practices and achieving the proficiency development targets set by national education reforms.

Methodology

The Selected ELT Textbook and Its Context

The selection of *Personal Best B1 Pre-intermediate Level Student's Book* for evaluation was driven by several compelling factors relevant to ongoing challenges in Thai tertiary English education. One key consideration is that, although the Ministry of Education in Thailand sets a B1 CEFR proficiency benchmark for high school graduates, numerous studies have shown that a substantial proportion of students enter university below this expected level (e.g., Waluyo, 2019; Wuttisrisiriporn & Usaha, 2019). This proficiency gap underscores the urgent need to evaluate the suitability and effectiveness of B1-level instructional materials used in foundational English courses.

Another important factor is the textbook's widespread adoption across Thai public universities, as confirmed by a comprehensive institutional survey conducted prior to this study. This broad usage enhances the relevance of the evaluation, as its findings may inform both practice and policy at a national level. Designed specifically for adult and young adult learners, the textbook targets the B1 CEFR level and offers integrated skill development in reading, listening, speaking, and writing, as well as grammar, vocabulary, and communication. Its alignment with the needs of Thai tertiary students striving for global communicative competence further reinforces its suitability for evaluation in this study.

Evaluation Instrument

To ensure both methodological rigor and contextual relevance, this study adopted the ELT textbook evaluation checklist developed and validated by Wuttisrisiriporn and Usaha (2019). This instrument was selected for its alignment with the Thai ELT context and its integration of CEFR descriptors and CLT principles—both central to Thailand's current language education policy. Its use in various ELT textbook evaluation studies across different contexts (e.g., Pirzad & Abadikhah,

2022; Shang, 2024) further attest to its reliability for research purposes.

Unlike generic international evaluation tools, this checklist underwent a rigorous validation process with Thai ELT professionals and was specifically designed to address challenges encountered in local educational settings. Its development drew on established frameworks from the work of Ahmed (2016), Bücü and Razi (2016), Hamidi et al. (2016), Al Harbi (2017), Khoo and Knight (2015), Laabidi and Nfissi (2016), and Litz (2005), ensuring its theoretical soundness and practical utility.

The checklist employs a five-point Likert scale and includes 70 items across eight evaluation domains: layout, design, and physical makeup (10 items); unit organization (7 items); content, topics, and language (15 items); teaching methods and activities (15 items); four-skill development (26 items); vocabulary (6 items); grammar (9 items); and supplementary materials (3 items). This comprehensive structure facilitates a systematic and granular evaluation of textbook components that impact instructional quality and learner outcomes.

Evaluation Procedure and Data Analysis

In accordance with Tomlinson's (2023) recommendation for multi-rater textbook evaluation, this study employed two experienced Thai university English lecturers as evaluators. Tomlinson emphasizes that involving multiple evaluators enhances the reliability and objectivity of textbook assessments, noting that two trained raters are often sufficient to achieve dependable inter-rater reliability. The selected evaluators were Thai university lecturers with over five years of teaching experience, a strong understanding of CEFR descriptors, and extensive familiarity with the needs and characteristics of Thai university learners of English.

Before the evaluation, the evaluators participated in a two-hour calibration session, which included a review of B1 CEFR descriptors and the evaluation checklist to ensure a shared understanding of the criteria and rating procedures. To establish inter-rater reliability, both evaluators independently assessed a pilot CEFR-aligned textbook using the checklist. Their ratings produced a Cohen's kappa of $\kappa = 0.82$, indicating strong agreement and acceptable reliability (Orwin, 1994).

The evaluation process followed Tomlinson's (2023) recommended multi-stage procedure. First, each evaluator independently reviewed *Personal Best B1* in its entirety, beginning with an examination of overall lesson structures, followed by a detailed task-by-task analysis. This approach allowed for both macro- and micro-level evaluations of the textbook's instructional design. Each checklist item was rated using a five-point scale (0 = "To no extent" to 4 = "To a very great extent"), with qualitative commentary provided alongside each score to capture insights beyond numerical ratings.

Following the independent assessments, a reconciliation phase was conducted in which discrepancies were collaboratively reviewed. The evaluators engaged in structured discussions to clarify their reasoning and reach agreement on contested items. Revised scores and justifications were recorded where consensus was achieved. This dual-layered evaluation—combining objective scoring with expert interpretation—ensured a balanced, reliable, and contextually grounded assessment of the textbook's suitability for Thai tertiary learners.

Results

The suitability and practicality of Personal Best B1 Student's Book were evaluated using Wuttisrisiriporn and Usaha's (2019) localized textbook evaluation checklist, which covers eight comprehensive evaluation categories. The following sections present a detailed analysis of the textbook, with the overall evaluation results summarized in Table 1.

Layout, Design, and Physical Makeup

The evaluation results demonstrate high inter-evaluator agreement, with a mean score of 3.72, indicating that the textbook is perceived as well-designed, well-organized, and effectively presented for its intended users. The evaluators found that the textbook maintains an appropriate balance between textual and non-textual information, which effectively engages student users in learning. In addition to high-quality printing and an attractive physical appearance, the textbook clearly presents key information—including the specific CEFR proficiency level, key features, and accompanying materials (both physical and online resources)—on the front and back covers.

Table 1

The Results of Textbook Evaluation Based on the Eight Evaluation Categories

Evaluation Category	Mean Score	Score Interpretation
1. Layout, design, and physical makeup	3.72	Very great extent
2. Unit organization	3.83	Very great extent
3. Content, topics, and language	3.70	Very great extent
4. Language teaching methods and activities	3.82	Very great extent
5. Four language skills		
Listening	3.67	Very great extent
Speaking	3.75	Very great extent
Reading	3.80	Very great extent
Writing	3.33	Great extent
6. Vocabulary	3.80	Very great extent
7. Grammar	3.75	Very great extent
8. Accompanying/supplementary materials	4.00	Very great extent

Note. 0.49 or lower = very little extent; 0.50-1.49 = little extent; 1.50-2.49 = some extent; 2.50-3.49 = great

extent; 3.5-4.0 = very great extent

The evaluation results further indicate that the textbook adequately provides students with useful references for target grammatical features and vocabulary lists with accompanying exercises. Additionally, periodic reviews are provided after every two units, allowing students to review and practice linguistic features covered in previous units. However, each periodic review focuses exclusively on grammar and vocabulary, without incorporating practice for the four language skills (listening, reading, speaking, and writing).

Figure 1

An Example of Semantically Unclear Non-Textual Materials

2 A Match sentences 1–5 with pictures a–e.

1 Amiko got to know Scott at a friend's house. _____	4 Staying in touch now is easier than it was. _____
2 They fell in love at first sight. _____	5 They broke up , but got back together in the end. _____
3 Scott asked Amiko out on a date. _____	

B Are the sentences true (T) or false (F)? Check your answers in the text.

Another strength of this textbook lies in its effective use of meaningful non-textual materials. The authors employ a wide range of non-textual materials to support students in better comprehending the textual information provided. Illustrative materials such as photographs, cartoon images, and colorful graphs are purposefully integrated into specific content. However, as noted by the evaluators, some cartoon images in the textbook do not present clear semantic meanings and may confuse students. For instance, in Unit 12 "People and Relationships" on page 106, the reading section introduces a set of semantically related lexical items about human relationships: *get to know*, *fall in love*, *ask someone out (on a date)*, *stay in touch*, *break up*, and *get back together* (see Figure 1). The accompanying reading exercise challenges students to match sentences with target phrases depicted by cartoon images. According to the evaluation, some cartoon images fail to clearly convey meaning and could potentially cause semantic confusion among students.

Unit Organization

The evaluation results for unit organization indicate that each unit is very well organized ($M = 3.83$). Each unit clearly outlines learning objectives at the beginning of each language skills section. Headings, subheadings, and instructions are well-crafted and easy for students to follow. Strong

connections between individual language sections and activities are observed throughout the units. Additionally, all activities and exercises embedded in each unit effectively encourage active practice of target language skills, aligning with CLT principles to enhance students' communicative competence in English.

However, a significant weakness identified in the textbook evaluation is that achieving the learning objectives within allotted teaching time proves challenging. Due to the substantial volume of content, activities, and exercises included in each unit, teachers require considerable time to cover them adequately in class. Consequently, teachers using this textbook may need to prioritize certain activities or exercises related to course assignments, quizzes, or tests, potentially overlooking other valuable exercises.

Content, Topics, and Language

The third evaluation category, Content, Topics, and Language, receives an overall favorable evaluation score from both evaluators ($M = 3.70$). One strength identified is the suitability of content and topics throughout the textbook. Topics such as *money and shopping*, *sports and fitness*, and *people and relationships* are engaging and motivating for B1 CEFR level students. The language used throughout the textbook is authentic and appropriate for the target proficiency level.

The evaluation further indicates that the textbook evenly distributes language aspects (vocabulary, listening, speaking, reading, writing, and grammar) throughout its content. Beyond promoting communicative competence, the textbook also develops higher-order skills such as critical thinking, problem-solving, and creative thinking. For instance, in Unit 7 "City Living" on page 65, a writing activity requires students to write an essay either supporting or opposing one of four argumentative topics, compelling them to provide reasoned arguments.

In addition to enhancing English language skills, the textbook seeks to promote mutual understanding and global cultural values. Its topics and content are free from cultural bias and negative stereotypes. A notable example appears in Unit 10, "*Sports and Fitness*" (p. 87), which features an interview-based reading article about Laura Sabetta, a wheelchair rugby player. This article underscores equal opportunities and highlights the achievements of individuals with physical challenges. Moreover, an analysis of the textbook's cultural content reveals that international cultures represent the largest proportion of cultural references (63.33%), followed by target cultures (British and American, 34%), while source culture content (Thai) is minimally represented (2.67%). This distribution reflects the textbook's emphasis on promoting intercultural awareness beyond dominant English-speaking cultural perspectives.

Language Teaching Methods and Activities

The language teaching methods and activities in the textbook were highly rated by both evaluators

for suitability and practicality ($M = 3.82$). The learning activities encompass a variety of teaching methodologies with strong emphasis on student-centered approaches. Common approaches such as CLT, CBI (Content-Based Instruction), and TBLT (Task-Based Language Teaching) are effectively utilized, especially in activities aimed at developing productive skills. These methods promote both fluency and accuracy in English use across authentic communicative tasks.

Figure 2

An Example of Student-Centered Activities

10 A PREPARE Choose one of the situations. Use the phrases and your own ideas to prepare questions.

 <p>Travel agent</p> <p>Vacations in the U.S. Best city to visit Cost of flights</p>	 <p>Pharmacist</p> <p>Medicine for the flu How often to take it Other advice to feel better</p>	 <p>Sports store salesperson</p> <p>Running shoes Best type for long distance Colors and sizes</p>
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B PRACTICE In pairs, make inquiries using your questions. Your partner should try to answer your questions and be as helpful as possible.

C PERSONAL BEST Were you a satisfied customer? What could your partner do differently to be more helpful? Choose another situation and make more inquiries.

For instance, in Unit 10 "Sports and Fitness" on page 91, a TBLT speaking task encourages students to choose one of three authentic roles: a travel agent, a pharmacist, or a salesperson at a sports shop (see Figure 2). This student-centered, paired activity prompts students to discuss real-life experiences related to their chosen role with a peer interlocutor. Students are required to prepare relevant content and language for the scenario, practice their interaction, and then present their language output. This activity effectively integrates fluency, accuracy, and communicative strategies as introduced by the teacher.

In addition to diverse in-class learning activities, another strength identified in the evaluation is the integration of an online learning platform, which provides students with out-of-class access to internet-based activities in listening, writing, grammar, vocabulary, and pronunciation from anywhere. However, both in-class and online activities primarily focus on individual and paired exercises. The textbook lacks integration of group and whole-class activities, limiting opportunities for extensive communication and collaboration within the classroom.

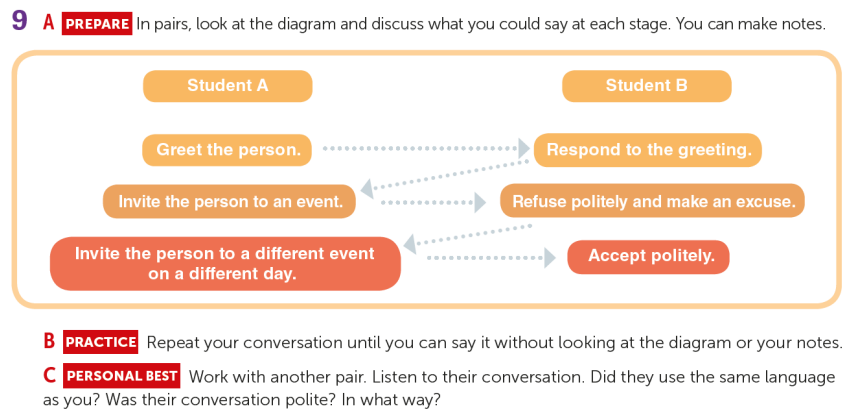
Four Language Skills

The results show that the textbook's listening materials are suitable for B1 CEFR level students ($M = 3.67$). Students can practice listening skills through various types of listening materials (e.g., conversations, interviews, news reports, pronunciation practice). All well-designed pre-, while-, and post-listening activities are systematically sequenced and integrated with practice of other

language skills, such as reading and speaking. The evaluation results further indicate that the listening materials develop students' various sub-skills including listening for main ideas and listening for details. However, all listening sub-skills should be clearly identified at the beginning of each listening activity to inform students of the particular sub-skill they are practicing.

Figure 3

An Example of Well-Designed, Authentic Speaking Tasks



The textbook's speaking materials are overall practical and sufficient ($M = 3.75$). The speaking materials presented throughout the textbook are well-designed for B1 CEFR level learners. The textbook first activates students' background knowledge related to content and target language use of a topic. Then, guided by their teacher, students practice using target grammatical features, vocabulary, and expressions before completing a real speaking task presented at the end of the speaking section. In addition to enhancing target language use, the speaking tasks allow students to employ various communication strategies (e.g., responding, sounding polite, turn-taking). For example, in a paired speaking activity in Unit 8 "Food for Thought" on page 73, students are challenged to use target grammatical features, lexical items, and expressions to achieve the speaking task (see Figure 3). Through this activity, students can practice greeting friends, making invitations to events, and politely refusing or accepting invitations. However, the textbook covers only a few forms of oral communication practices, such as conversations, paired discussions, and pronunciation drills. Other speaking activities, such as debates, group presentations, and group meetings, could also be incorporated to enhance students' oral communication performance.

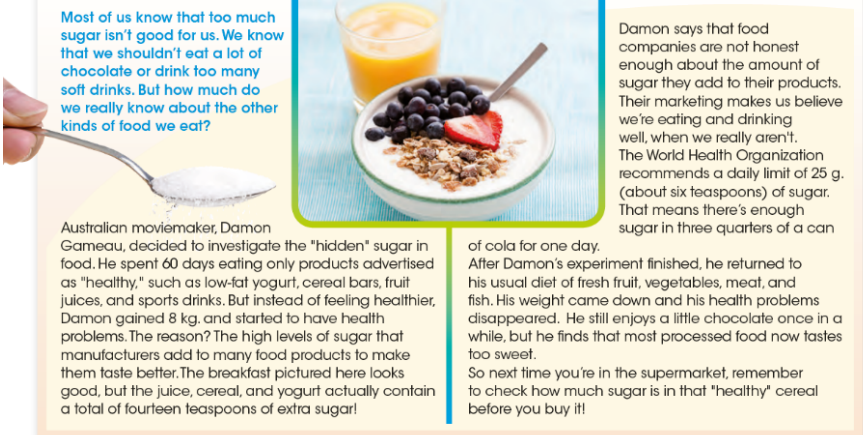
The evaluation results for reading skills show that the reading materials in this textbook are highly appropriate for B1 level students ($M = 3.80$). The reading content and topics effectively address students' interests and needs—smartphones, ice-cream, university, and long-distance relationships, to name a few. The results further show that reading activities in this textbook aim to enhance students' reading sub-skills (e.g., scanning for information, reading for details, recognizing discourse functions), which are essential for reading comprehension. Additionally, the textbook is adequately equipped with various pre-, while-, and post-reading activities (e.g.,

presenting vocabulary, activating background knowledge) and different forms of reading exercises (e.g., multiple choice, true/false, matching, short answer questions).

Figure 4

An Example of Unhighlighted Reading Texts

3 Look at the picture of the breakfast. Do you think it's healthy? How much added sugar do you think it contains? Read the text and check.



Most of us know that too much sugar isn't good for us. We know that we shouldn't eat a lot of chocolate or drink too many soft drinks. But how much do we really know about the other kinds of food we eat?

Australian moviemaker, Damon Gameau, decided to investigate the "hidden" sugar in food. He spent 60 days eating only products advertised as "healthy," such as low-fat yogurt, cereal bars, fruit juices, and sports drinks. But instead of feeling healthier, Damon gained 8 kg, and started to have health problems. The reason? The high levels of sugar that manufacturers add to many food products to make them taste better. The breakfast pictured here looks good, but the juice, cereal, and yogurt actually contain a total of fourteen teaspoons of extra sugar!

Damon says that food companies are not honest enough about the amount of sugar they add to their products. Their marketing makes us believe we're eating and drinking well, when we really aren't. The World Health Organization recommends a daily limit of 25 g. (about six teaspoons) of sugar. That means there's enough sugar in three quarters of a can of cola for one day.

After Damon's experiment finished, he returned to his usual diet of fresh fruit, vegetables, meat, and fish. His weight came down and his health problems disappeared. He still enjoys a little chocolate once in a while, but he finds that most processed food now tastes too sweet.

So next time you're in the supermarket, remember to check how much sugar is in that "healthy" cereal before you buy it!

However, language preparation in terms of vocabulary and grammatical features in reading materials is identified as one potential weakness. Very few target vocabulary items and grammatical features are highlighted in the reading texts (see Figure 4), so clear visual signals are not provided to draw students' attention to these target learning elements.

Regarding the evaluation of writing skills, the results indicate that the provided writing activities are relatively practical and suitable for B1 CEFR students ($M = 3.33$), with both strengths and weaknesses identified. The major strengths are that the textbook includes various written genres for students to practice (e.g., essays, emails, descriptions of places). The writing activities help students understand the organization of target texts and use target grammatical features and vocabulary. Additionally, the writing activities expose students to the writing process, including generating ideas, planning, and drafting to complete writing tasks. At the end of each writing task, students are encouraged to provide feedback on their peers' writing (peer feedback). However, according to the evaluation checklist used in this study, the textbook lacks a writing assessment checklist. Such a checklist would be very useful for teachers and students as a practical guideline for self-, peer-, and teacher feedback and writing assessment.

Vocabulary


The results show that vocabulary items and activities in the textbook are dedicated to enhancing students' vocabulary learning ($M = 3.80$). The textbook's vocabulary, thoroughly aligned with B1 CEFR level, is distributed appropriately in terms of vocabulary load (both single words and multiword units) and complexity level (progressing from simple to more complex) within topics

related to students' routines and interests, such as food, sports, and relationships. Vocabulary is contextualized at the beginning of each unit and section for the four language skills and is recycled throughout and until the end of each unit. There are also separate vocabulary reference and practice sections covering target vocabulary from each unit through various types of learning exercises, including gap-fill, matching, and (multi)word selection in context. Figure 5 presents an example of effective vocabulary practice involving word selection in context from the textbook.

Figure 5

An Example of Vocabulary-in-Context Practice

12A Relationships

- 1  12.1 Put the words in the box in the correct columns. Listen and check.

cousin	only child	roommate	employer	enemy	stranger	twin	ex-husband	stepsister	bride	colleague	neighbor
in-laws	boss	girlfriend	groom	single parent	relative	employee	business partner	classmate	brother-in-law		

family	couple	work/study	home	other

- 2 Complete the sentences with the words from exercise 1.

- | | |
|---|---|
| <p>1 Daisy and I work in the same office. She's my _____.</p> <p>2 I'm an _____. I don't have any brothers or sisters.</p> <p>3 Harry and Luke share an apartment. They're _____.</p> <p>4 Carolina got a divorce in 2013, but she still sees her _____.</p> <p>5 It was a lovely wedding. The _____ wore a long white dress, and the _____ wore a gray suit.</p> | <p>6 Our next-door _____ just sold his house.</p> <p>7 He's very friendly. He doesn't have an _____ in the world.</p> <p>8 Her husband died, so she's a _____ to Emma, her daughter.</p> <p>9 This is my _____. We're not identical, but we look alike.</p> <p>10 People are really friendly here. A _____ helped me when I was lost.</p> |
|---|---|

Grammar

Overall, the learning materials for grammar are well-designed and well-suited for B1 CEFR students ($M = 3.75$). Students can enhance their understanding of English grammar as the textbook introduces target grammatical features in meaningful contexts with clear examples and explanations, focusing on both forms and functions. The target grammatical features are well-sequenced in terms of syntactic complexity, progressing from simple to complex sentences. Similar to vocabulary learning materials, there are separate grammar reference and practice units, in addition to those within the core units, to reinforce students' grammar acquisition.

Accompanying/Supplementary Materials

The evaluation results indicate that the supplementary materials of Personal Best B1 Student's Book are very useful for both teachers and students ($M = 4.00$). Teachers can utilize high-quality teaching tools and materials (e.g., digital iBook, teaching materials on the textbook's online platform) in their classrooms. Meanwhile, students can access the textbook's online learning platform to review lessons, complete additional exercises, and obtain necessary learning materials (e.g., class audio files, video scripts, and answer keys).

Discussion

This study evaluated *Personal Best B1 Student's Book*, a CEFR B1-level textbook, to assess its alignment with CEFR standards and its suitability within the Thai ELT context, aiming to enhance Thai tertiary students' English proficiency. The findings indicate that the textbook is generally appropriate for use in Thai university classrooms, particularly due to its alignment with CEFR descriptors and incorporation of CLT principles. It demonstrates notable strengths in overall design, sequencing of activities, integration of the four language skills, and inclusion of digital learning resources. However, the evaluation also identified limitations that, if not addressed, may hinder instructional effectiveness and student learning outcomes. These results align with previous research on CEFR-aligned ELT materials in EFL contexts (e.g., Ahmed, 2016; Ulla, 2019; Wuttisrisiriporn & Usaha, 2019).

A major strength of the textbook lies in its coherent structure and user-friendly layout, which received high evaluation scores. The units are well-organized, with clearly stated learning objectives and consistent integration of the four language skills, demonstrating strong alignment with CEFR descriptors and CLT-informed pedagogy. Most activities are student-centered and communicative, fostering learner engagement and interaction—key elements in developing communicative competence (Tomlinson, 2023; Council of Europe, 2020). Notably, the inclusion of authentic texts and real-life scenarios in speaking and writing tasks supports the development of key language functions at the B1 level, such as expressing opinions, making suggestions, and participating in discussions. This finding echoes Gutiérrez-Bermúdez's (2014) evaluation of *New English File: Elementary*, which highlighted the importance of CEFR alignment in supporting appropriate language function development.

Nevertheless, several areas warrant further attention. A primary concern is content overload. Although the textbook offers a wide range of communicative activities, the volume of content within each unit often exceeds the time typically available for classroom instruction. This challenge reflects a broader issue found in many CEFR-aligned textbooks, as highlighted by Zulkipli and Nasri's (2024) systematic review, which identified time constraints as one of three recurring implementation challenges alongside cultural mismatches and diverse learner proficiency levels. Similarly, Calafato's (2021) study of multilingual teaching practices in Norwegian and Russian classrooms found that teachers frequently struggled with time constraints when implementing prescribed textbooks. As a result, teachers may be compelled to skip or rush through activities, thereby compromising the depth of engagement that CLT aims to promote. This concern is especially pertinent in the Thai educational context, where strict curriculum pacing and limited instructional hours further constrain the effective implementation of such resource-intensive materials. One possible solution is for institutions and curriculum planners to consider developing flexible pacing guides or streamlined activity pathways that help teachers

prioritize essential tasks while maintaining instructional coherence and depth.

Visual and non-textual materials represent another area of mixed effectiveness. While many images are engaging and pedagogically appropriate, some cartoon-style illustrations lack clarity, which may cause confusion among learners. This finding is consistent with Basal et al. (2016), who noted that unclear visuals in ELT materials can impede both comprehension and communicative intent. In EFL contexts such as Thailand, where learners often rely heavily on visual cues to support language processing, ambiguous illustrations can undermine the multimodal scaffolding central to CLT pedagogy. To address this issue, teachers should be encouraged to critically evaluate visual content and, where necessary, supplement it with culturally and semantically appropriate alternatives to enhance learner comprehension and communicative effectiveness.

Cultural content representation in the textbook reveals both strengths and limitations. On the one hand, the integration of diverse international topics promotes global awareness and supports the development of intercultural communicative competence (ICC), aligning well with the principles of CLT. On the other hand, the minimal inclusion of Thai cultural content—only 2.67%—significantly limits opportunities for learners to engage in meaningful communication grounded in their own cultural identities. As Abdul Rahim and Jalalian Daghigh (2020) argue, incorporating learners' source cultures into ELT materials enhances personal relevance and fosters authentic communication. Similarly, Ahamat and Kabilan's (2022) study found that rural Malaysian elementary teachers frequently adapted CEFR-aligned textbooks to better meet local cultural and learner needs. To address this gap, teachers should supplement textbook content with materials that encourage students to express and explore Thai cultural perspectives. This approach would align more closely with the CEFR's emphasis on sociopragmatic competence and ICC, which call for learners to navigate both their own and others' cultural contexts in communication (Council of Europe, 2020).

In terms of skill development, the textbook effectively supports the integrated practice of listening, reading, speaking, and writing. The listening and reading materials are well sequenced and appropriately leveled, facilitating both comprehension and the development of critical thinking skills. However, one notable limitation is the absence of visual cues—such as bolded or highlighted text—to draw attention to key vocabulary and grammatical structures in the reading sections. This reduces opportunities for incidental learning and language noticing, which are particularly important for EFL learners. As Towns (2020) argues, highlighting linguistic features within authentic texts can enhance both retention and communicative use. This is especially relevant in the Thai context, where learners often have limited exposure to English outside the classroom and rely heavily on in-class input to build their language proficiency.

The evaluation also identified the writing component as relatively underdeveloped, receiving the lowest mean score among the eight evaluation categories. Although the textbook includes a range

of writing tasks and introduces key text types, the lack of accompanying assessment rubrics or checklists significantly limits its effectiveness for both formative and summative assessment. This omission runs counter to the principles of CLT, which emphasize learner autonomy, self-assessment, and performance-based evaluation. According to the CEFR (Council of Europe, 2020), B1 learners should be supported in producing coherent, structured texts for real communicative purposes. Providing clear, task-specific assessment criteria would not only enhance students' ability to monitor their own progress but also clarify the communicative objectives of each writing task, thereby strengthening the pedagogical value of writing instruction within the CLT framework.

Conversely, the grammar and vocabulary sections emerged as two of the textbook's strongest components. Target grammatical structures and lexical items are introduced in meaningful contexts, reinforced through varied practice formats, and systematically recycled across units. This approach aligns with recommendations by Nation (2013) and Hua and Li (2015), who emphasize the importance of repeated and contextualized exposure to language forms for effective acquisition. Such design supports the development of procedural knowledge, enabling learners to move beyond passive awareness toward fluent, spontaneous language use in real-life communicative situations. By integrating form and function within authentic tasks, the textbook effectively promotes both linguistic accuracy and communicative competence—core goals of CEFR- and CLT-aligned instruction.

The inclusion of supplementary materials and an online learning platform further enhances the textbook's practicality and pedagogical value. These resources provide learners with additional opportunities for language practice, reinforcement, and self-directed learning beyond the classroom. As Castillo-Cuesta and Quinonez-Beltran (2022) note, technology-enhanced materials can significantly boost learner engagement and support the development of communicative skills when integrated effectively within a CLT framework. However, the successful implementation of such resources is contingent upon teachers' digital literacy and the availability of technological infrastructure—both of which vary widely across Thai tertiary institutions. To maximize the benefits of these digital tools, targeted professional development and institutional support are essential.

Taken together, these findings suggest that while *Personal Best B1 Student's Book* provides a solid foundation for CEFR- and CLT-aligned instruction, its full pedagogical potential can only be realized through thoughtful and context-sensitive adaptation. Teachers should selectively implement activities to manage time constraints, supplement content to enhance cultural relevance, scaffold visual and reading materials to support comprehension, and incorporate clear assessment tools—particularly for writing tasks. These recommendations are consistent with broader research emphasizing that the effectiveness of ELT textbooks depends not only on their

design quality but also on how they are implemented within specific educational contexts (Cunningsworth, 1995; Ellis, 1998; Wuttisrisiriporn & Usaha, 2019).

Conclusions

This study evaluated *Personal Best B1 Student's Book*, a CEFR-aligned ELT textbook commonly used in Thai public universities, to assess its suitability for B1-level instruction. The evaluation revealed that while the textbook offers strong pedagogical value, several areas require targeted adaptation to better meet the needs of Thai tertiary learners.

The textbook performed well in grammar instruction, teaching methodology, and the provision of supplementary materials, reflecting sound integration of CEFR principles and CLT approaches. Its learner-centered design and skills integration align well with Thailand's educational goals. However, challenges emerged related to content overload, limited Thai cultural representation, unclear visuals, and insufficient diversity in speaking tasks. The weakest area was writing, due to the absence of clear assessment criteria essential for learner development. These findings emphasize the importance of systematic, context-sensitive textbook evaluation at all stages of use. As shown in prior frameworks (e.g., Cunningsworth, 1995; Ellis, 1998), evaluations help inform material selection, instructional planning, and professional development, especially in CEFR-implementing contexts like Thailand.

This study also contributes to the broader literature on CEFR in Asian EFL contexts. It confirms that while CEFR-aligned materials offer valuable structure, their effectiveness depends on local adaptation to address learner preferences, cultural relevance, and institutional constraints. Implications include the need for teacher training in textbook adaptation, flexible pacing guides, and the development of locally relevant supplementary materials—particularly for writing instruction. Additionally, the textbook's digital tools show potential, but require adequate infrastructure and teacher support for successful integration.

While this study offers valuable insights, it is limited by its reliance on expert evaluation alone. Although the use of two expert evaluators adds credibility, future research should incorporate classroom-based trials and student perspectives to enhance generalizability. Investigating actual learning outcomes would also provide a more comprehensive understanding of textbook effectiveness. In addition, longitudinal and comparative studies could help determine the relative efficacy of various CEFR-aligned textbooks and the impact of different adaptation strategies on learner progress. As this study focused on a single ELT textbook, future research should consider evaluating a wider range of textbooks used at a specific educational level to assess their continued suitability and alignment with learning objectives.

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