

ACTIVE LEARNING ACROSS PROFICIENCY LEVELS IN THAI AS A FOREIGN LANGUAGE CONVERSATION COURSES: UNDERGRADUATE STUDENTS' PERCEPTIONS AND EXPERIENCES IN TAIWAN

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ABSTRACT

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Active learning (AL) has been widely recognized as an effective pedagogical approach in higher education; however, limited research has examined how language proficiency shapes students' perception of AL in Thai as a foreign language (TFL) conversation courses, particularly in international contexts such as Taiwan. This mixed-methods comparative study investigated undergraduate students' perceptions of AL implementation in Intermediate Thai Conversation 2 (ITC2) and Advanced Thai Conversation 2 (ATC2) at a public university in Taiwan, with particular attention to proficiency-related differences. Quantitative data were collected through an online questionnaire completed by 30 students (17 from ITC2 and 13 from ATC2) and analyzed using non-parametric procedures, including descriptive statistics (median and interquartile range), the Mann-Whitney U test, and rank-biserial correlation. Qualitative insights were obtained from semi-structured interviews and examined through thematic analysis. The findings indicate that students in both courses reported consistently high to very high levels of positive perceptions across all instructional steps and key dimensions of the instruction. Yet, statistically significant differences emerged in the instructional steps of Experiencing by Observing, Experiencing by Doing, and Reflection, as well as in the key dimension of collaboration and interaction, with advanced learners demonstrating higher positive perceptions. Qualitative evidence suggests that higher-proficiency students were better equipped to engage with cognitively demanding and interaction-intensive tasks, whereas intermediate learners experienced greater linguistic strain, task-related anxiety, and reliance on scaffolding. These findings suggest that language proficiency functions as a mediating factor in learners' cognitive and affective responses to AL structures in conversation classrooms.

Keywords: Thai as a foreign language (TFL); active learning (AL); students' perceptions and experiences; conversation instruction; language proficiency levels

1. INTRODUCTION

In recent years, the teaching of Thai as a foreign language (TFL) has gained increasing attention due to the growing demand for Thai language proficiency in various academic and professional fields. In many countries, including Taiwan, this has been further fueled by the popularity of Thai cultural products—such as television dramas, especially Boy Love (BL) series (Formosa Television, 2023), which have captivated a broad base of young learners. As an essential component of language acquisition, conversation classes play a crucial role in developing learners' communicative competence. However, traditional teacher-centered approaches often limit students' opportunities for meaningful engagement in the learning process (Caine, 2020).

In response, active learning (AL) strategies have been widely endorsed in higher education as a means to enhance learning outcomes, foster learning engagement, and promote deeper, more meaningful learning experiences (Doolittle et al., 2023), including in second and foreign language instruction (Seemanath & Watanapokakul, 2024; Yusuk, 2021). Chickering and Gamson (1987) advocate AL as a key principle for effective education, emphasizing its potential to shift learners from passive recipients of knowledge to active participants in the learning process. Building on this perspective, Fink (2003) proposes that effective AL integrates three essential components: Getting Information and Ideas, Experiencing by Doing and Observing, and Reflecting. These elements collectively form a foundation for AL environments that are student-centered and interactive. Apart from this, AL is characterized by the integration of technology, multimodal resources, and the promotion of higher-order thinking skills, all of which contribute to enhanced student engagement, language proficiency, and more positive attitudes toward learning (Prince, 2004; Seemanath & Watanapokakul, 2024; Watanapokakul, 2024; Yusuk, 2021).

While outcome-based studies have often investigated the impacts of AL on measurable academic achievement (Freeman et al., 2014; Prince, 2004; Seemanath & Watanapokakul, 2024), less attention has been paid to how learners in under-researched language contexts, like TFL, experience and interpret AL practices in authentic classroom settings. Perception-based research has the potential to provide complementary insights into pedagogical feasibility and learner engagement (Fredricks et al., 2004; Kuh, 2009). In language classrooms, students' perceptions often influence motivation, participation, and sustained engagement (Dörnyei, 2001; Noels et al., 1999), and thus serve as indicators of the cognitive, affective, and social viability of instructional innovations. Particularly in emerging or less-explored instructional environments, understanding learners' perceptions constitutes an important preliminary step before conducting large-scale experimental or outcome-based investigations (Fullan, 2007; Rogers, 2003).

Despite the widely acknowledged benefits of AL in higher education, limited research has explored students' perceptions of its implementation in Thai conversation courses, particularly in international contexts such as Taiwan. Furthermore, it remains unclear whether learners at different proficiency levels experience and interpret AL practices in comparable ways. Comparing learners in intermediate and advanced conversation courses may shed light on how proficiency mediates engagement with communicative tasks, scaffolding, and reflective activities, thereby contributing to discussions of differentiated instruction in communicative language teaching (Ellis, 2003; Vygotsky, 1978).

Accordingly, following the integration of AL instruction in Intermediate Thai Conversation 2 (ITC2) and Advanced Thai Conversation 2 (ATC2) at a public university in Taiwan, this exploratory study investigates undergraduate students' perceptions of AL practices in these two courses. Rather than assessing the causal effects on measurable learning outcomes, the study examines how AL is experienced *in situ* and whether perceptual differences emerge across proficiency levels. By providing context-specific insights into the implementation and sustainability of AL in TFL conversation courses, this study contributes to the expanding literature on AL in foreign language education.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

The review is organized into three sections: teaching Thai as a foreign language, active learning, and students' perceptions.

2.1 Teaching Thai as a foreign language

Studies on teaching TFL have expanded in recent decades, reflecting growing global interest. Despite this, the research has been uneven. Pornumpaisakul and Yenbutra (2018), reviewing 156 studies from 1975–2015, found that 62% focused on technology and innovation, while only 12% examined teaching methodologies. This imbalance suggests that while technology is well studied, pedagogical approaches—especially those promoting communicative competence—remain underexplored.

Within conversation instruction, Sriputthatham (2005) and Liang (2013) emphasized the importance of context-specific materials tailored to Chinese-speaking learners, highlighting the role of instructional design in supporting oral proficiency. At the same time, linguistic challenges continue to constrain communicative development. Learners with limited vocabulary often rely on non-verbal communication, reducing comprehension and interaction (Na-prang, 2011). Structural differences between Chinese and Thai—especially in consonants, vowels, tones, and word order—further complicate listening and speaking skills, leading to frequent errors (Hannok et al., 2024).

Beyond linguistic factors, classroom interaction patterns also shape communicative opportunities. Zhao and Boonyaparakob (2022) reported that teacher talk occupied 77.6% of class time, while students spoke only 6.2%, with silence making up 16.3%. This imbalance limits practice opportunities, highlighting the urgent need for more active, student-centered approaches in TFL classrooms.

2.2 Active learning

Traditional teacher-centered instruction often fosters a passive learning environment, in which students receive rather than actively engage with information. Recognizing these limitations, educators increasingly advocate student-centered methods (Goodwin, 2024). Among them, AL has gained widespread attention.

Bonwell and Eison (1991) define AL as “instructional activities involving students in doing things and thinking about what they are doing” (p. 5). Fink (2003) further identifies three components: (1) Getting Information and Ideas, (2) Experiencing by Doing and Observing, and (3) Reflecting. When integrated systematically, these components enable instructors to design learning environments that promote interaction, critical thinking, and meaningful knowledge construction.

Empirical studies across disciplines—including Accounting (Guttikonda & Coco, 2013), Agriculture (Ghezzi-Haefl & Dowling, 2019), Economics (Nguyen & Trimarchi, 2010), and English (Seemanath & Watanapokakul, 2024; Yusuk, 2021)—show the adaptability of AL across diverse instructional settings. Still, foreign language classrooms present distinctive interactional demands, where communicative competence, peer negotiation, and effective engagement are central.

To address inconsistencies in AL implementation, Lu and Watanapokakul (2025) proposed a comprehensive framework (Figure 1) comprising three concentric layers: Fink’s (2003) core components; the five characteristics of effective implementation (student-centeredness, higher-order thinking skills, multimodality, interactivity, technology integration); and four engagement dimensions (intellectual, social, physical, and emotional). This framework conceptualizes AL as a systematically structured instructional model capable of influencing achievement, engagement, and learning perceptions.

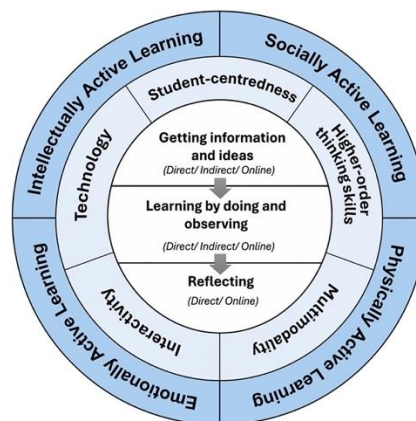


Figure 1: Comprehensive active learning framework (Lu & Watanapokakul, 2025, p. 602)

2.3 Students’ perceptions

In language learning, students’ perceptions play a crucial role in shaping how instructional experiences are understood and internalized. They reflect learners’ interpretations of classroom practices and knowledge construction (Yunita & Maisarah, 2020) and influence motivation and engagement (Dörnyei, 2001; Fredricks et al., 2004). Examining perceptions therefore provides insights into how learners cognitively and affectively experience instructional practices.

Consistent with this perspective, Noels et al. (1999) investigated the link between perceptions of teachers’ communicative style and students’ intrinsic and extrinsic motivation. Their study revealed that the more controlling and the less informative students perceived the teacher to be, the lower students’ intrinsic

motivation was. In Tse's (2000) study, foreign language autobiographies were used to examine the effects of language courses and teaching methods on students' perceptions of their classroom's language study and on their views of their own ability to acquire a foreign language. Her research participants reported both favorable and unfavorable reactions to methods and activities in their foreign language classes. Their progress and interest in learning the language were mainly due to teacher attention and sympathy. They appreciated having opportunities to speak the language and to participate in discussions. Regarding non-beneficial interactions and activities, the lack of focus on communication and oral language development and the impracticality of the language presented in class were the two most often mentioned by the participants. In contrast, Brown (2009) used questionnaires in his study and reported that the students seemed to favor a grammar-based approach, whereas their teachers preferred a more communicative classroom. This might be because the students experienced a disconnect between teaching and testing. Their exercises or assignments might be graded for grammatical accuracy rather than communicative effectiveness.

Regarding teaching TFL, Wiboolyasarin et al. (2018) revealed that TFL learners had positive attitudes regarding oral corrective feedback given by their teacher. Recently, Ho et al. (2023) conducted research on English as a foreign language (EFL) teachers' perceptions of implementing AL techniques in teaching speaking skills, and their findings indicated that teachers had positive perceptions about the implementation of AL techniques in their speaking classes. The teachers found that AL techniques gave their students more opportunities to express their ideas and construct new knowledge both meaningfully and critically.

Although research on TFL has examined technological tools, linguistic challenges, and classroom interaction patterns, relatively little attention has been given to instructional methodologies. In particular, studies investigating students' perceptions of AL in TFL contexts are scarce, leaving important questions about how learners experience and evaluate such pedagogical approaches.

3. RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1. What are students' perceptions of the implementation of AL instruction in ITC2 and ATC2?
2. Are there any differences in students' perceptions of AL instruction between ITC2 and ATC2?

4. METHODOLOGY

This study used a mixed-methods comparative cross-sectional design to comprehensively analyze students' perceptions and experiences of AL instruction by combining quantitative questionnaire data with qualitative insights obtained from semi-structured interviews. The primary objective was to explore how students experienced and interpreted AL practices within a specific instructional context, rather than evaluate causal effects on measurable learning outcomes.

4.1 Participants

There were 18 students enrolled in ITC2 and 13 students enrolled in ATC2 at a public university in Taiwan during the second semester of the 2024 academic year. Thai was either their single major or one of their double majors.

Thirty completed online questionnaires were returned by 17 students in ITC2 and 13 in ATC2. Out of 17 students, the first group was mostly female (88.24%) and Taiwanese (94.12%), with the majority aged 20 years old (70.59%). Most (88.24%) had Thai as the single major, and 13 students (76.47%) had earned grades of A- or higher in ITC1. Over half rated their Thai (52.94%) and English (58.82%) proficiency as intermediate. Only 29.41% had studied Thai before entering university.

Out of 13 students in ATC2, 61.54% of whom were female, and all but one were Taiwanese (92.31%). Most were 21 years old (76.92%), and for most of them, Thai was their single major (76.92%). Nine students (69.23%) had earned an A+ in ATC1 in the previous semester, with the majority rating themselves as intermediate (53.85%) in both Thai and English. Prior exposure to Thai before university was reported by 30.77% of the group.

Although each group included one non-Taiwanese student, all participants, including these two students, reported Mandarin as their native language and were non-native speakers of Thai.

4.2 Research settings

The study was conducted at the only public university in Taiwan offering the Thai language as a major. The program is housed within the Department of Southeast Asian Languages and Cultures. Students who choose Thai as their single major or one of their double majors are required to enroll in Thai Conversation courses. The program offered six Thai conversation courses at three proficiency levels—elementary,

intermediate, and advanced—with two courses at each level. These courses focus on listening and speaking in Thai, with content ranging from everyday conversations on familiar topics to discussions on academic and unfamiliar subjects. Each course has 14 lessons. In each week, there are two 100-minute sessions of instruction.

4.3 Instruction

Drawing upon the comprehensive AL framework developed by Lu and Watanapokakul (2025) (see Figure 1), the instructional design for the ITC2 and ATC2 courses was developed to operationalize AL principles in TFL conversation instruction. Table 1 summarizes the core instructional sequence and its alignment with key characteristics of effective AL implementation and AL engagement dimensions.

Table 1: AL instructional design of the courses

Sessions	Instructional steps	Characteristics of effective AL implementation						AL engagement dimensions		
		Student-centeredness	Higher-order Thinking skills	Multimodality	Interactivity	Technology	Intellectual	Social	Physical	Emotional
Session 1 (100 minutes)	1.1 Lecture (50 minutes)									
	1.1.1 Warm-up	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
	1.1.2 Learning vocabulary				✓	✓	✓			
	1.1.3 Reviewing vocabulary	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
	1.2 Experiencing by Observing (40 minutes)									
	1.2.1 Pre-view questions				✓	✓	✓	✓		
	1.2.2 Watching a video clip		✓	✓		✓	✓			
	1.2.3 Post-view discussion (pair work)	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓
Session 2 (100 minutes)	1.3 Reflection (10 minutes)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
	2.1 Vocabulary Quiz (5 minutes)					✓	✓		✓	
	2.2 Experiencing by Doing (85 minutes)									
	2.2.1 Researching information for the prompt	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓		✓	✓
	2.2.2 Creating a dialogue (pair work)	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
	2.2.3 Presenting the dialogue	✓			✓		✓	✓	✓	✓
	2.3 Reflection (10 minutes)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

In Session 1, instruction began with a lecture presented using Google Slides. The teacher started with a warm-up activity by showing some pictures or a short video and asking students a few questions related to the lesson topic. The lesson's vocabulary was then introduced and discussed with the students, followed by a review through a paper-based exercise or an online or onsite game-based educational exercise. After a short break, the focus shifted to Experiencing by Observing, where students were first presented with pre-view questions through Google Slides to ensure that students understand them before watching the video clip, which was related to the lesson's topic, on YouTube. Students were allowed to watch the video clip 2–3 times, depending on the length of the video, before being randomly paired using a free website for randomly selecting names or items, called Wheel of Names (<https://wheelofnames.com/>), to discuss and respond to the pre-view questions. The link to the video was provided to the students for further review if needed. The session concluded with a Reflection period where the teacher led a discussion and provided feedback to the students.

In Session 2, students began by completing an online vocabulary quiz on the meanings of Thai words learned in Session 1. The quiz, created using Google Forms, consisted of multiple-choice and/or matching questions. Next, the class moved into Experiencing by Doing. Students were first given a prompt and asked to research information for the prompt individually. Afterward, students were randomly paired using the Wheel of Names application and tasked with creating a dialogue (approximately 6–8 turns) based on the information they gathered. They were encouraged to incorporate vocabulary from the previous session into their dialogue. Students then took a few minutes to practice before presenting or role-playing their dialogues in front of the class. The session concluded with reflection, where the teacher provided feedback and encouraged students to reflect on what and how they had learned.

Thai served as the primary medium of instruction, while English was used as a supplementary language to clarify complex content.

4.4 Research instruments

The study employed two instruments: an online questionnaire and semi-structured interview questions, both in English. The questionnaire, based on Lu and Watanapokakul's (2025) active learning framework (Figure 1), was used to capture students' perceptions after AL instruction. It consisted of three parts: Part One (10 multiple-choice demographic questions), Part Two (29 five-point Likert scale items on instructional steps), and Part Three (21 five-point Likert scale items on overall perceptions of the key instructional dimensions). The five-point Likert scale ranges from 1 to 5, where 1 = very low agreement, 2 = low agreement, 3 = moderate agreement, 4 = high agreement, and 5 = very high agreement. In the questionnaire, each item was accompanied by the five-point response scale and its corresponding descriptors. Seventeen semi-structured interview questions were developed to align with the questionnaire in order to elicit more in-depth insights into students' learning experiences.

Both instruments were validated by three experts in education and TFL using the Index of Item-Objective Congruence (IOC; Rovinelli & Hambleton, 1977). IOC values were 0.96 for the questionnaire and 0.80 for the interview questions, both exceeding the recommended threshold of 0.67 (Turner & Carlson, 2003).

The questionnaire was piloted with ten students and the interviews with five. Based on feedback, questionnaire formatting in Google Forms was refined for usability, interview questions were revised for clarity, and three new items were added, resulting in a final set of 20 interview questions.

4.5 Data collection

Starting in late May 2025, students were informed about the study, and volunteers signed consent forms before completing an online questionnaire via Google Forms (10–15 minutes). The questionnaire showed high internal consistency reliability (Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.965$), exceeding the 0.70 threshold recommended by Cronbach (1957). Although very high alpha values may suggest potential redundancy among items, the questionnaire items were intentionally developed to represent conceptually distinct aspects of AL and were reviewed by experts to ensure content validity.

Following questionnaire completion, participants were randomly selected from the volunteers for semi-structured interviews until data saturation was reached: six from ITC2 and four from ATC2. Data saturation was defined as the point at which successive interviews no longer generated new codes, themes, or meaningful insights relevant to the research questions. One additional student from each group was subsequently interviewed to confirm that no new information emerged. Each individual interview lasted approximately 20–30 minutes and was conducted by a researcher in English and/or Thai, depending on the participant's preference. All interviews were audio-recorded for further analysis.

To ensure that participants were capable of understanding the English-language questionnaire and interview questions, their English proficiency was examined using national entrance examination scores (see Appendix). The average English score of ITC2 students was 12.94 out of 15 (ranging from 11 to 15), while the average score for ATC2 students was 13 out of 15 (ranging from 11 to 14). These results indicate that participants generally had high English proficiency, supporting their ability to understand the questionnaire and articulate their perspectives effectively in the interviews.

4.6 Data analysis

The quantitative data from the online questionnaire were analyzed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS). Prior to inferential testing, assumption diagnostics were conducted using the Shapiro-Wilk test to assess the normality of the data distribution and Levene's test to examine homogeneity of variances between groups. Results revealed that the data for all items significantly deviated from normal distribution ($p < .05$), while the assumption of equal variances was generally met ($p > .05$). Given the consistent violation of the normality assumption, the relatively small sample size ($n = 30$), and the ordinal nature of the 5-point Likert scale data, non-parametric statistical procedures were utilized.

a. Descriptive Statistics: Medians (*Mdn*) and Interquartile Ranges (*IQR*) were calculated to summarize the central tendency and dispersion of students' perceptions. Since all questionnaire items were positively worded, reverse coding was not required. Higher median scores directly indicate higher levels of students' positive perceptions toward the instruction (see Table 2).

Table 2: Descriptions, medians, and interpretations of the five-point Likert scale

Description	Median	Interpretation
5 = Very high agreement	5	Very high level of positive perception
4 = High agreement	4	High level of positive perception
3 = Moderate agreement	3	Moderate level of positive perception
2 = Low agreement	2	Low level of positive perception
1 = Very low agreement	1	Very low level of positive perception

b. Inferential Statistics: The Mann-Whitney U test was conducted to determine if there were statistically significant differences in perceptions between the two independent groups. Results are reported using the U statistic, the Z score, and the asymptotic significance (p -value).

c. Effect Size: To assess the magnitude of group differences, the rank-biserial correlation (r) was calculated. The interpretation of r followed Cohen's (1988) guidelines, where 0.1 is a small effect, 0.3 is a medium effect, and 0.5 is a large effect (Fiel Peres, 2026).

The qualitative data obtained from the semi-structured interviews were analyzed using the six steps of thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006): familiarizing oneself with the data, generating initial codes, searching for themes, reviewing themes, defining and naming themes, and producing the report. To enhance analytic reliability, a Code-Recode process (Anfara et al., 2002) was applied to ensure systematic refinement and consistency in coding across multiple iterations.

5. FINDINGS

Following the research questions, findings are presented using the weaving approach (Fetters & Freshwater, 2015), integrating quantitative data from questionnaire Parts 2 and 3 with qualitative interview data and organizing them by theme.

5.1 Students' perceptions of the instructional steps

Part 2 of the questionnaire assessed students' agreement with statements on the instructional steps, with results shown in Tables 3–8.

Table 3: Findings on Lecture

Item	Intermediate ($n = 17$)		Advanced ($n = 13$)		U	Z	p	Interpretation	r
	<i>Mdn</i>	<i>IQR</i>	<i>Mdn</i>	<i>IQR</i>					
1.1 The warm-up activity helped me engage with the lesson.	4	1	4	1	112	0.069	.964	No significant difference	-.014
1.2 I liked the warm-up activity.	4	2	4	1	104	-0.290	.789	No significant difference	.059
1.3 The lecture on the lesson's vocabulary was useful and necessary for watching the video clip.	4	1	4	0	136	1.207	.237	No significant difference	-.231
1.4 I liked the lecture on vocabulary.	4	1	4	1	153	1.918	.058	No significant difference	-.385
1.5 The vocabulary review activity (onsite and online) helped me remember the vocabulary better.	5	2	4	1	110.5	0	1	No significant difference	0
1.6 I liked the vocabulary review activities.	5	2	4	0	125	0.645	.534	No significant difference	-.131
Overall	4	1	4	1	4406.5	1.323	.186	No significant difference	-.108

Table 3 presents findings for the Lecture step. Students in ITC2 reported high levels of agreement that both warm-up activities and vocabulary lectures were useful and students liked them, with the median score of 4 across Items 1.1–1.4 ($IQR = 1$ –2) and very high levels of agreement that the vocabulary review activities were useful and students liked them, with the median score at 5 ($IQR = 2$). Overall, the median score for this group was 4 ($IQR = 1$), indicating a high level of positive perception toward the Lecture step. The following is a comment from a student:

"The lecture provided me with an understanding of Thai vocabulary, but in some units, there were almost one hundred words in the lecture, which were too many for us." (S-4, ITC2)

A suggestion was made to support vocabulary retention:

"I would like to ask the teacher to add the meaning of vocabulary in Mandarin as well. This can help us memorize the meaning of the words more easily than memorizing both Thai words and their English explanations." (S-3, ITC2)

Moreover, another student shared ideas about vocabulary review activities:

"I didn't have time to review the words I had just learned, and there were too many of them. But, I liked the online games the teachers provided for reviewing the vocabulary. Although I couldn't perform well in class after the vocabulary lecture, I could play the games anytime and anywhere to review the words later." (S-5, ITC2)

Students in ATC2 also reported high levels of agreement across all Lecture-related items ($Mdn = 4$, $IQR = 0-1$), resulting in an overall median score of 4 ($IQR = 1$), indicating a high level of the overall positive perception. One student shared:

"I like the warm-up activity because it helps me know the topic I am studying in each class. Specifically, I liked the short video clips and pictures that the teacher used to draw students into the lesson. It was fun, and some were funny." (S-8, ATC2)

An ATC2 student also commented on vocabulary review activities:

"The word-guessing game (Charades) that the teacher let us play in class was very fun. It helped us review the vocabulary we had learned and motivated every student to participate. But, the game was time-consuming and affected the time available for the subsequent activities." (S-7, ATC2)

Across both groups, no statistically significant differences were found in any items (all $p > .05$). An analysis of the overall score confirmed that there were no statistically significant differences in students' perceptions of the Lecture step between the two groups ($U = 4406.5$, $Z = 1.323$, $p = .186$, $r = -.108$), with a small effect size. Taken together, both quantitative and qualitative findings suggest that students in both groups perceived the Lecture step positively, while also identifying areas for improvement, particularly in terms of vocabulary quantity, perceived workload, and time allocation.

Table 4: Findings on Experiencing by Observing

Item	Intermediate ($n = 17$)		Advanced ($n = 13$)		U	Z	p	Interpretation	r
	Mdn	IQR	Mdn	IQR					
2.1 The pre-view questions helped me prepare for the video clip.	5	1	4	1	104	-0.299	.782	No significant difference	.059
2.2 I liked the pre-view questions activity.	4	2	4	1	87	-1.056	.301	No significant difference	.213
2.3 Watching the video clip was an effective way to learn Thai conversation.	4	2	4	2	99.5	-0.483	.645	No significant difference	.100
2.4 The video clip helped me understand how Thai conversation is used in real-life situations.	4	2	4	1	118	0.334	.755	No significant difference	-.068
2.5 I liked the activity of watching a video clip.	4	1	4	1	120.5	0.447	.671	No significant difference	-.090
2.6 The post-view discussion helped me better understand the video content.	4	1	5	1	96	-0.671	.517	No significant difference	.131
2.7 The post-view discussion allowed me to use Thai with my partner.	4	2	5	1	72	-1.735	.087	No significant difference	.348
2.8 I liked the post-view discussion activity.	4	2	5	1	67	-1.964	.052	No significant difference	.394
Overall	4	2	4	1	6079.5	-1.986	.047*	Significant difference	.140

* $p < .05$

Table 4 presents findings for the Experiencing by Observing step. Students in ITC2 reported high levels of agreement across all items ($Mdn = 4$, $IQR = 1-2$), except for Item 2.1, which was rated very high ($Mdn = 5$, $IQR = 1$). The overall median score for this group was 4 ($IQR = 2$), indicating a high level of positive perception toward this step. Some students commented:

"The questions teacher showed on the screen before we watched the VDO clips helped me know what to focus on while watching them. They helped me watch with a clear purpose." (S-1, ITC2)

"After watching a video clip, the teacher asked us to discuss the content using the questions presented before watching it. Discussion with a partner helped me better understand the video, as we shared ideas

and learned from each other. But, because of our limited Thai vocabulary, some of my friends and I were not able to fully discuss it in Thai, so we switched to our L1 during the discussion." (S-4, ITC2)

Students in ATC2 reported high levels of agreement on every item regarding the pre-view questions and video-watching activities ($Mdn = 4$, $IQR = 1-2$). Very high levels of agreement were also observed for Items 2.6–2.8 concerning post-view discussion activities ($Mdn = 5$, $IQR = 1$). The overall median score for this group was 4 ($IQR = 1$), indicating a high level of positive perception toward this step. Some students shared:

"Pre-view questions helped us know what to focus on in the video. When the teacher explained and checked our understanding of the questions beforehand, it ensured that we understood them and knew what to focus on while watching. The discussion after the video allowed us to use Thai for communication and idea-sharing. It was fun listening to my partner's ideas too." (S-10, ATC2)

"I learned how Thai people speak by watching the video clips, but some of the clips were monologues, like news reports. They were a bit tedious. I prefer more dialogues where I can see how Thai people verbally interact in real-life or everyday situations." (S-7, ATC2)

Across both groups, no statistically significant differences were found for any item (all $p > .05$). Nevertheless, an analysis of overall perceptions, based on all response instances revealed a statistically significant difference between the two groups ($U = 6079.5$, $Z = -1.986$, $p = .047$). The effect size was small ($r = .140$) with ATC2 students exhibiting significantly higher overall positive perception than ITC2 students.

Table 5: Findings on Vocabulary Quiz

Item	Intermediate ($n = 17$)		Advanced ($n = 13$)		U	Z	p	Interpretation	r
	Mdn	IQR	Mdn	IQR					
3.1 The vocabulary quiz motivated me to review the vocabulary I learned in the previous class.	5	1	5	1	103.5	-0.331	.759	No significant difference	.063
3.2 I liked the vocabulary quizzes.	3	2	4	2	59.5	-2.195	.03*	Significant difference	.462
Overall	4	2	4	1	327	-1.806	.072	No significant difference	.260

* $p < .05$

Table 5 presents findings for the Vocabulary Quiz step. Students in ITC2 reported a very high agreement that the quiz motivated them to review vocabulary learned in the previous class ($Mdn = 5$, $IQR = 1$). However, only moderate agreement regarding liking vocabulary quizzes ($Mdn = 3$, $IQR = 2$) was reported. The overall median score for this group was 4 ($IQR = 2$), indicating a high level of positive perception. One student reflected:

"I know that vocabulary is very important for learning languages, including Thai, but in each week I had only a few days to review and memorize a lot of words for the quiz. It was stressful." (S-2, ITC2)

In contrast, another student shared a more positive view, along with suggestions for improvement:

"I like vocabulary quizzes. They forced me to review the vocabulary learned after class. I think one of the learning drives for Taiwanese students is stress. Taiwanese students tend to pay more attention to courses that assign quizzes, tasks, and homework. I suggest that the teacher select about 40–50 essential words from each lesson's word list learned to reduce the burden on students and let the students prepare those selected words for the weekly quiz." (S-4, ITC2)

A further suggestion focused on enhancing quiz design:

"For the quiz, is it possible to provide pictures along with the English meanings or let us match Thai words with their Mandarin meanings? This could help reduce students' burden." (S-1, ITC2)

Similarly, the students in ATC2 also reported a very high agreement that the quizzes motivated them to review vocabulary learned ($Mdn = 5$, $IQR = 1$). There was also a high agreement with liking vocabulary quizzes ($Mdn = 4.00$, $IQR = 2$). The overall median score for this group was 4 ($IQR = 1$), indicating a high level of positive perception toward this instructional step. One student shared:

"I don't mind having a quiz every week. I think the quizzes pushed me to review the vocabulary learned in every lesson." (S-7, ATC2)

A comparison between groups revealed a statistically significant difference for Item 3.2 ($U = 59.9$, $Z = -2.195$, $p = .03$, $r = .462$), indicating that ATC2 students reported significantly higher agreement than ITC2 students in their preference of vocabulary quizzes. The effect size suggests a moderate practical difference. Yet, the overall comparison was not statistically significant ($U = 327$, $Z = -1.806$, $p = .072$, $r = .260$). Although the effect size approached a moderate magnitude, the difference between groups in their overall perceptions of the Vocabulary Quiz step was not statistically significant.

Table 6: Findings on Experiencing by Doing

Item	Intermediate ($n = 17$)		Advanced ($n = 13$)		U	Z	p	Interpretation	r
	<i>Mdn</i>	<i>IQR</i>	<i>Mdn</i>	<i>IQR</i>					
4.1 Researching information for the prompt helped me engage with the lesson.	4	1	4	0	105.5	-0.228	.838	No significant difference	.045
4.2 I liked the activity of researching information before creating a dialogue.	4	1	4	1	78.5	-1.419	.163	No significant difference	.290
4.3 Creating a dialogue with a partner helped me use vocabulary in context.	4	2	4	1	74.5	-1.639	.106	No significant difference	.326
4.4 Creating a dialogue with a partner helped me improve my Thai conversation skills.	4	1	5	1	75.5	-1.62	.110	No significant difference	.317
4.5 I liked the activity of creating a dialogue with my partner.	3	1	5	1	67	-1.89	.062	No significant difference	.394
4.6 Presenting (or role-playing) our pair's dialogue to the class helped improve my speaking skills in Thai.	4	1	5	1	70.5	-1.833	.070	No significant difference	.362
4.7 I liked the activity of presenting (or role-playing) our pair's dialogue.	3	1	4	1	61	-2.155	.033*	Significant difference	.448
Overall	4	1	4	1	3716.5	-4.118	<.001*	Significant difference	.314

* $p < .05$

Table 6 presents findings for the Experiencing by Doing step. Students in ITC2 reported a high level of agreement across most items ($Mdn = 4$, $IQR = 1-2$), indicating high positive perceptions of activities involving researching information, creating dialogues, and presenting or role-playing. Still, moderate agreement was observed for preferences related to dialogue creation and presentation activities (Items 4.5 and 4.7; $Mdn = 3$, $IQR = 1$). The overall median score for this group was 4 ($IQR = 1$), indicating a high level of positive perception toward this step. Two students provided the following comments and suggestions:

"Role-playing made me nervous and stressed. Some topics were difficult and time-consuming to create a dialogue for, so I didn't have enough time to practice before role-playing." (S-2, ITC2)

"For each role-play, I think creating a dialogue of 8-10 turns is a bit time-consuming for us. I suggest 6-8 turns instead." (S-3, ITC2)

Students in ATC2 also reported a high level of agreement for research, dialogue-creation, and dialogue presentation activities (Items 4.1-4.3, 4.7) ($Mdn = 4$, $IQR = 0-1$), while a very high agreement was observed for items related to collaborative dialogue production and presentation (Items 4.4-4.6) ($Mdn = 5$, $IQR = 1$). The overall median score for this group was 4 ($IQR = 1$), indicating a high level of positive perception. One student reflected on their progress:

"After the midterm, I noticed that my classmates and I didn't need to prepare full scripts for the dialogues. While discussing with our partners, we noted down the key points, and during the role-play, we created the dialogue from those notes. It felt very natural." (S-7, ATC2)

Comparisons between groups revealed no statistically significant differences for most items ($p > .05$). However, one statistically significant difference was found for Item 4.7 ($U = 61$, $Z = -2.155$, $p = .033$, $r = .448$), indicating that ATC2 students reported significantly higher agreement than ITC2 students in their preference

for presenting or role-playing dialogues. The effect size suggests a moderate practical difference. Analysis of the overall score indicated that the difference between ITC2 and ATC2 was statistically significant ($U = 3716.5$, $Z = -4.118$, $p < .001$, $r = .314$), with the effect size reaching a moderate magnitude. While both groups perceived the Experiencing by Doing step positively, ATC2 students demonstrated significantly higher overall perceptions, whereas ITC2 students expressed concerns related to anxiety, workload, and preparation time.

Table 7: Findings on Reflection

Item	Intermediate ($n = 17$)		Advanced ($n = 13$)		U	Z	p	Interpretation	r
	Mdn	IQR	Mdn	IQR					
5.1 The reflection activity helped me review my learning.	4	0	4	1	78.5	-1.549	.127	No significant difference	.290
5.2 The reflection activity helped me identify areas for improvement.	5	1	5	1	110	-0.024	1	No significant difference	.005
5.3 I liked the reflection activity.	4	1	5	1	56.5	-2.408	.017*	Significant difference	.489
5.4 The teacher's feedback was helpful.	5	0	5	0	93	-1.134	.271	No significant difference	.158
5.5 The teacher's feedback helped me understand my strengths and weaknesses in speaking Thai.	5	1	5	1	103.5	-0.356	.741	No significant difference	.063
5.6 I liked when the teacher gave immediate feedback after we responded to discussions.	5	0	5	0	107	-0.226	.846	No significant difference	.032
Overall	5	1	5	1	3325.5	-2.169	.030*	Significant difference	.164

* $p < .05$

Table 7 presents findings on the Reflection step. Students in ITC2 reported a very high level of agreement ($Mdn = 5$, $IQR = 0-1$) on most items, especially those regarding students receiving feedback from the teacher. One student shared:

"I liked when the teacher gave us individual feedback after role-playing. Although I didn't perform well in some role-plays, the teacher's positive feedback motivated me to do better in the next one." (S-1, ITC2)

Yet, two items were rated at only a high level of agreement: the benefit of the reflection activity in helping them review their learning ($Mdn = 4$, $IQR = 0$), and their preference for the reflection activity ($Mdn = 4$, $IQR = 1$). Two students explained their perspectives:

"The reflection activity was at the end of the class. I felt less motivated to do it after doing it so many times throughout the course." (S-3, ITC2)

"I realized that reflections help students think about what and how we learned, but sometimes the reflection activity took place after class had finished. I think the teacher could skip this activity if the class is already over." (S-5, ITC2)

Nevertheless, the overall median score for the Reflection step among students in ITC2 was still 5 ($IQR = 1$), indicating a very high level of positive perception.

Students in ATC2 also reported a very high level of agreement ($Mdn = 5$, $IQR = 0-1$) with all items, except Item 5.1 ($Mdn = 4$, $IQR = 1$) where students expressed:

"The reflection activity helped me understand what and how I learned in the class." (S-10, ATC2)

"The reflection activity helped me review the lesson learned, but it shouldn't be too long." (S-9, ATC2)

With that said, the overall median score for ATC2 students was still 5 ($IQR = 1$), indicating a very high level of positive perception toward this step.

Comparisons between groups revealed no statistically significant differences for most items ($p > .05$). Nonetheless, a statistically significant difference was found for Item 5.3 ($U = 56.5$, $Z = -2.408$, $p = .017$, $r = .489$), indicating that ATC2 students reported a significantly higher positive perception than ITC2 students in their preference for the reflection activity. The effect size suggests a moderate practical difference. Analysis of the overall score indicated that the difference between ITC2 and ATC2 was statistically significant ($U = 3325.5$,

$Z = -2.169, p = .030, r = .164$), suggesting a small practical difference between groups. These findings suggest that both groups perceived the Reflection step positively, with ATC2 students demonstrating a slightly greater positive perception than ITC2 students.

Table 8: Findings on overall perceptions for the instructional steps

Steps	Intermediate (<i>n</i> = 17)		Advanced (<i>n</i> = 13)		<i>U</i>	<i>Z</i>	<i>p</i>	Interpretation	<i>r</i>
	<i>Mdn</i>	<i>IQR</i>	<i>Mdn</i>	<i>IQR</i>					
Lecture	4	1	4	1	4406.5	1.323	.186	No significant difference	-.108
Experiencing by Observing	4	2	4	1	6079.5	-1.986	.047*	Significant difference	.140
Vocabulary Quiz	4	2	4	1	327	-1.806	.072	No significant difference	.260
Experiencing by Doing	4	1	4	1	3716.5	-4.118	<.001*	Significant difference	.314
Reflection	5	1	5	1	3325.5	-2.169	.030*	Significant difference	.164
Grand Overall (Part 2)	4	1	4	1	84532	-2.453	.014*	Significant difference	.083

* $p < .05$

Table 8 presents a summary of students' overall perceptions for each instructional step and the grand overall scores for Part 2 of the questionnaire. Results indicate that while both groups maintained high positive perceptions across all steps, significant differences in perception level emerged in three of the five steps: Experiencing by Observing, Experiencing by Doing, and Reflection. In each of these instances, ATC2 students demonstrated higher levels of positive perception than ITC2 students.

Although the grand overall median scores for ITC2 and ATC2 students were identical ($Mdn = 4, IQR = 1$), representing a high level of positive perception, the analysis revealed a statistically significant difference between the groups ($U = 84532, Z = -2.453, p = .014, r = .083$), with a very small effect size, indicating that while the difference is statistically significant, the practical gap between the groups' perceptions is minimal. Taken together, these findings suggest that while both groups perceived the AL instructional steps positively, ATC2 students demonstrated a slightly higher and more consistent positive perception than ITC2 students.

5.2 Students' overall perception of the key instructional dimensions

Part 3 of the questionnaire contained five sub-parts about students' overall perception of the key instructional dimensions, with findings shown in Tables 9–14.

Table 9: Findings on engagement and motivation

Item	Intermediate (<i>n</i> = 17)		Advanced (<i>n</i> = 13)		<i>U</i>	<i>Z</i>	<i>p</i>	Interpretation	<i>r</i>
	<i>Mdn</i>	<i>IQR</i>	<i>Mdn</i>	<i>IQR</i>					
1.1 I felt engaged in the activities during this class.	5	1	5	1	100.5	-0.468	.656	No significant difference	.090
1.2 I was motivated to participate in the class activities throughout the course.	5	1	5	1	91	-0.918	.371	No significant difference	.176
1.3 The variety of activities in this class kept me interested.	4	1	4	1	96	-0.658	.525	No significant difference	.131
1.4 I enjoyed the learning experience in this conversation class.	4	1	5	1	84	-1.277	.21	No significant difference	.24
Overall	4	1	5	1	1491.5	-1.632	.103	No significant difference	.156

Table 9 presents findings on engagement and motivation. ITC2 students reported a very high level of agreement that they felt engaged and motivated in the class activities ($Mdn = 5, IQR = 1$; Items 1.1 and 1.2), while they reported only a high level of agreement that the variety of activities maintained their interest and that they enjoyed the learning experience ($Mdn = 4, IQR = 1$; Items 1.3 and 1.4). The overall median score was 4 ($IQR = 1$), indicating a high level of positive perception toward engagement and motivation. Some students reflected:

"The class was engaging. There were activities for students to do. This was different from other courses, where I just sat in the classroom listening to the lecture and taking notes." (S-5, ITC2)

"Some activities were fun and made me want to join in, like playing games and watching short videos, but some were too intimidating. For example, when the teacher asked for volunteers to answer questions,

I felt hesitant to speak, especially when I wasn't sure if my answer was correct, so I just kept silent." (S-6, ITC2)

"I enjoyed this class, and I looked forward to attending it every week." (S-1, ITC2)

In addition, one student offered a suggestion to enhance classroom engagement:

"Taiwanese students are often afraid of giving wrong answers, even when they have ideas to share, so they tend to avoid volunteering and remain silent. But, when the teacher calls on students by name, they are more likely to speak out." (S-4, ITC2)

Meanwhile, ATC2 students reported a very high level of agreement ($Mdn = 5$, $IQR = 1$) across most items (Items 1.1, 1.2, and 1.4), and only a high level of agreement ($Mdn = 4$, $IQR = 1$) with Item 1.3. The overall median score was 5 ($IQR = 1$), suggesting a very high level of positive perception. A student remarked:

"I felt motivated to learn in this class, and the class instruction was very engaging." (S-8, ATC2)

Comparisons between groups revealed no statistically significant differences for all items ($p > .05$). For the analysis of the overall scores, there was no statistically significant difference between the two groups ($U = 1491.5$, $Z = -1.632$, $p = .103$, $r = .156$), reaching a small effect size. This indicates that students in both groups similarly and positively perceived the instruction as fostering engagement and motivation.

Table 10: Findings on collaboration and interaction

Item	Intermediate ($n = 17$)		Advanced ($n = 13$)		U	Z	p	Interpretation	r
	Mdn	IQR	Mdn	IQR					
2.1 Working with different classmates in pair or group activities was beneficial to my learning.	4	1	5	1	66	-1.966	.052	No significant difference	.403
2.2 Collaborating with my classmates during class activities helped me improve my Thai listening and speaking skills.	4	1	5	1	79	-1.443	.155	No significant difference	.285
2.3 Working with classmates in pair or group activities helped me build stronger relationships with my peers.	4	1	4	2	105	-0.245	.824	No significant difference	.050
Overall	4	1	5	1	746	-2.164	.031*	Significant difference	.250

* $p < .05$

Table 10 presents findings on collaboration and interaction. Students in ITC2 rated all items at a high level of agreement ($Mdn = 4$, $IQR = 1$). The overall median score was 4 ($IQR = 1$), indicating a high level of positive perception. Some students elaborated on their experiences:

"Working with a partner is good, but when the partner didn't collaborate, it was an uncomfortable experience. When I was paired with friends or high-ability students, it was fun and productive—we had great discussions and created enjoyable dialogues. I was once paired with an introverted student. It felt very awkward. We barely talked and ended up working separately on our parts. Luckily, the teacher graded our role-play individually." (S-3, ITC2)

"I noticed that the teacher tried to change our partners every week using an online tool to randomly assign pairs. However, would it be possible to occasionally let us choose our own partners?" (S-6, ITC2)

In addition, one student reflected on student-teacher interactions as follows:

"Apart from being afraid of losing face when orally responding to the teacher's questions, many students, including myself, had a limited Thai vocabulary to express our ideas, so we chose to remain silent." (S-2, ITC2)

For ATC2, students reported a very high level of agreement ($Mdn = 5$, $IQR = 1$), and that working with classmates benefited their learning (Item 2.1) and improved their Thai listening and speaking skills (Item 2.2). Students shared:

"Discussing with friends and the teacher, and creating dialogues with a partner, gave me opportunities to use Thai for communication every week. I noticed that by the end of the semester, I felt more confident, and I spoke and listened to Thai more fluently." (S-9, ATC2)

"Working in pairs allowed me to learn from my partner, while my partner sometimes learns from me." (S-10, ATC2)

Regarding student-teacher interactions, one student noted:

"Taiwanese students are used to listening to lectures and taking notes, so we rarely participate voluntarily in discussions with teachers in class although we may have ideas to share. However, if the teacher is kind, open-minded, and supportive, and classmates are friendly, we feel more comfortable and confident about speaking." (S-8, ATC2)

Notwithstanding this, students reported only a high level of agreement with Item 2.3 ($Mdn = 4$, $IQR = 2$), concerning building relationships with peers. One student reflected on the challenges of pair work:

"I was once paired with a partner who had low motivation and didn't really collaborate. I tried my best to encourage and help my partner, but it didn't work. In the end, I ended up doing more than 80% of the pair work. It was okay because the teacher graded the role-play based on individual performance. I believe that having a helpful partner fosters a positive learning atmosphere and builds good relationships. However, being paired with an unmotivated partner can negatively affect the learning experience and diminish the effectiveness of pair work." (S-7, ATC2)

Nevertheless, the overall median score for ATC2 was still 5 ($IQR = 1$), indicating a very high level of positive perception toward collaboration and interaction.

Comparisons between groups also revealed no statistically significant differences for all items ($p > .05$). Still, analysis of the overall scores showed a statistically significant difference between the two groups ($U = 746$, $Z = -2.164$, $p = .031$, $r = .250$), approaching a moderate effect size. These findings suggest that while both groups perceived the instruction to be promoting collaboration and interaction, ATC2 students demonstrated a significantly higher positive perception than ITC2 students.

Table 11: Findings on intellectual engagement

Item	Intermediate ($n = 17$)		Advanced ($n = 13$)		U	Z	p	Interpretation	r
	Mdn	IQR	Mdn	IQR					
3.1 The class activities encouraged me to think critically about the content.	4	1	4	1	101	-0.44	.677	No significant difference	.086
3.2 The instruction helped me apply my Thai language skills thoughtfully.	4	1	4	1	96.5	-0.637	.539	No significant difference	.127
3.3 The class activities challenged me to think creatively.	5	1	5	1	96	-0.692	.504	No significant difference	.131
Overall	4	1	4	1	882.5	-1.006	.317	No significant difference	.113

Table 11 presents findings on intellectual engagement. Students in ITC2 reported a very high level of agreement ($Mdn = 5$, $IQR = 1$) that the class activities challenged them to think creatively (Item 3.3). They also reported a high level of agreement ($Mdn = 4$, $IQR = 1$) that the class activities encouraged them to think critically (Item 3.1) and the instruction helped them apply Thai language skills thoughtfully (Item 3.2). The overall median score was 4 ($IQR = 1$), suggesting a high level of positive perception that the instruction effectively stimulated cognitive engagement. One student shared:

"I liked the questions the teacher asked us in class. Some questions didn't have right or wrong answers. The teacher told us to say whatever we thought." (S-5, ITC2)

However, another student commented on the difficulty of certain classroom challenges:

"Some lesson topics were a bit difficult. Since we were in the Intermediate course, our abilities were still limited, especially when it came to vocabulary and creating dialogues. I admit that for some difficult topics, I used AI to help translate my dialogue from Mandarin into Thai." (S-3, ITC2)

In response, another student offered a practical suggestion:

"During the first few weeks, creating a dialogue can be time-consuming and too difficult. I suggest the teacher give a model dialogue related to the weekly lesson topic. Then, students can create their own dialogues using the model as a guideline and use the vocabulary learned in the class to replace some words in the dialogue." (S-4, ITC2)

Similarly, students in ATC2 reported identical median scores for Items 3.1–3.3 ($Mdn = 4$, $IQR = 1$) and had the same overall median score ($Mdn = 4$, $IQR = 1$). One ATC2 student explained how the challenges enhanced their intellectual engagement:

"It was fun and challenging when we had to create our own dialogues or do role-plays based on a specific situation. This process pushed me to think more creatively, and I found that during role-playing, whenever new ideas came to mind, I always added them rather than strictly following the script." (S-8, ATC2)

When comparing groups, there were no statistically significant differences across all items (all $p > .05$). For the analysis of the overall scores, no statistically significant differences were found between them ($U = 882.5$, $Z = -1.006$, $p = .317$, $r = .113$), with a small effect size. This suggests that students in both groups perceived the instruction as intellectually engaging—promoting critical and creative thinking as well as thoughtful language use—with no meaningful differences between groups.

Table 12: Findings on learning effectiveness

Item	Intermediate ($n = 17$)		Advanced ($n = 13$)		U	Z	p	Interpretation	r
	Mdn	IQR	Mdn	IQR					
4.1 The instruction helped me understand the lessons better.	4	1	4	1	120.5	0.47	.655	No significant difference	-.09
4.2 The instruction helped me improve my Thai listening skills.	4	1	4	1	117	0.295	.785	No significant difference	-.059
4.3 The instruction helped me improve my Thai speaking skills.	4	1	4	1	124	0.627	.546	No significant difference	-.122
4.4 The instruction enabled me to use learned vocabulary into my conversations.	4	1	4	1	97	-0.625	.547	No significant difference	.122
4.5 The instruction encouraged me to communicate in Thai more naturally.	4	1	4	1	122	0.53	.612	No significant difference	-.104
4.6 I feel more confident using Thai in conversations after completing this class.	4	1	4	1	124.5	0.65	.531	No significant difference	-.127
Overall	4	1	4	1	4235	.818	.414	No significant difference	-.065

Table 12 presents findings on students' perceptions of learning effectiveness. For ITC2, median scores were consistently 4 ($IQR = 1$) for all six items, indicating high levels of agreement. The overall median score for ITC2 was also 4 ($IQR = 1$), suggesting a high level of positive perception toward the learning effectiveness of the instruction. One student reflected:

"The instruction provided opportunities to listen and speak Thai. For listening outside the class, I could find materials in Thai—such as dramas, songs, news, and advertisements—on the Internet for practice. But for speaking, this class was my only real opportunity. I could speak Thai with the teacher and my classmates during the instruction." (S-2, ITC2)

However, one student noted challenges regarding vocabulary integration:

"Creating a dialogue was challenging and time-consuming. It was harder to integrate the vocabulary we had just learned into our dialogue. If the teacher provided a sample dialogue and allowed us to replace certain words with new vocabulary from the lesson, it could help us and save time." (S-5, ITC2)

Similarly, students in ATC2 reported identical median scores of 4 ($IQR = 1$) across all items. The overall median score for ATC2 was 4 ($IQR = 1$), suggesting a high level of positive perception. One student described their experience:

"We learned new Thai vocabulary in every lesson, listened to Thai video clips, and spoke a lot in Thai. The teacher always initiated questions for us to respond to." (S-10, ATC2)

Another student reflected on the need for authentic interaction:

"We are not native Thai speakers, so when we talk to each other, we are not exposed to authentic Thai input. We can learn everyday Thai from the video clips the teacher presents, but I'd prefer more opportunities to interact with native Thai speakers. The teacher is the only native Thai speaker in our class. Since there are many native Thai teaching assistants (TAs) and students at the university, I suggest that instead of having extra tutorial classes by Thai TAs, the teacher invite some of them to join our class during dialogue creation and role-playing activities, so we can listen to and speak with native Thai speakers. Also, organizing Thai language gatherings between Thai learners and native Thai students—or assigning a native Thai buddy for each of us—could be a great way to give us more opportunities to use Thai in real-life conversations." (S-9, ATC2)

Comparisons between groups revealed no statistically significant differences across all items (all $p > .05$). An analysis of the overall scores also indicated no statistically significant difference between the groups ($U = 4235$, $Z = 0.818$, $p = .414$, $r = -.065$), with a very small effect size. This suggests that students in both groups perceived the instruction as effective in enhancing their Thai conversation skills, vocabulary use, and communicative confidence, with no meaningful differences between groups.

Table 13: Findings on overall satisfaction with active learning

Item	Intermediate ($n = 17$)		Advanced ($n = 13$)		U	Z	p	Interpretation	r
	<i>Mdn</i>	<i>IQR</i>	<i>Mdn</i>	<i>IQR</i>					
5.1 I am satisfied with the overall instruction in this class.	5	1	4	1	114.5	0.19	.868	No significant difference	-.036
5.2 The teaching methods used in this class are effective for learning Thai conversation for foreigners.	4	2	4	1	87.5	-1.043	.307	No significant difference	.208
5.3 I would prefer to have more classes with this instruction in the future.	4	1	4	1	107	-0.16	.891	No significant difference	.032
5.4 I would recommend this class to other foreign students learning Thai conversation.	4	1	5	1	87.5	-1.069	.296	No significant difference	.208
5.5 I experienced active learning during class instruction.	4	1	5	0	71	-1.925	.057	No significant difference	.357
Overall	4	1	5	1	2359.5	-1.703	.089	No significant difference	.146

Table 13 presents findings on students' overall satisfaction with AL. The students in ITC2 reported high levels of agreement ($Mdn = 4$, $IQR = 1-2$) across nearly all items (Items 5.2–5.5). One student shared:

"I think it worked for our class, but I'm not sure if it would work for other Thai conversation classes." (S-2, ITC2)

However, ITC2 students reported a very high level of agreement ($Mdn = 5$, $IQR = 1$) regarding overall satisfaction with the instruction. A student reflected:

"The instruction pushed me to be active in class. Sometimes I wasn't in the mood, but the activities made me think and get involved. I'd be happy to have this kind of instruction in my next conversation course." (S-4, ITC2)

The overall median score of ITC2 was 4 ($IQR = 1$), suggesting a high level of positive perception regarding their overall satisfaction with AL.

ATC2 students, on the other hand, reported median scores of 5 ($IQR = 0-1$) on Items 5.4–5.5, reflecting a very high level of agreement, and 4 ($IQR = 1$) on Items 5.1–5.3, reflecting a high level of agreement. The overall median score for ATC2 was 5 ($IQR = 1$), suggesting a very high level of positive perception. One student shared:

"I really enjoyed our class. My classmates and I sometimes talked after class, and we all agreed that our class was active and fun. Studying in this class was never stressful, and we looked forward to attending it every week." (S-10, ATC2)

Comparisons between groups revealed no statistically significant differences between any items (all $p > .05$). An analysis of the overall scores also indicated no statistically significant difference between ITC2 and ATC2 ($U = 2359.5$, $Z = -1.703$, $p = .089$, $r = .146$), with a small effect size. This suggests that students in both groups expressed positive overall satisfaction with the AL instruction, with no meaningful differences between groups.

Table 14: Findings on students' overall perceptions of the instruction

Steps	Intermediate ($n = 17$)		Advanced ($n = 13$)		U	Z	p	Interpretation	r
	Mdn	IQR	Mdn	IQR					
Engagement and motivation	4	1	5	1	1491.5	-1.632	.103	No significant difference	.156
Collaboration and interaction	4	1	5	1	746	-2.164	.031*	Significant difference	.250
Intellectual engagement	4	1	4	1	882.5	-1.006	.317	No significant difference	.113
Learning effectiveness	4	1	4	1	4235	.818	.414	No significant difference	-.065
Overall satisfaction with active learning	4	1	5	1	2359.5	-1.703	.089	No significant difference	.146
Grand Overall (Part 3)	4	1	4	1	48918	0.091	.928	No significant difference	-.004

* $p < .05$

Table 14 presents a summary of students' overall perceptions of the AL instruction and the grand overall scores for Part 3 of the questionnaire. Results indicate that while both groups maintained high positive perceptions across all key dimensions of the instruction, a significant difference in perception levels emerged only in the dimension of collaboration and interaction. Regarding this dimension, ATC2 students demonstrated a higher level of positive perception than ITC2 students.

The grand overall median scores for ITC2 and ATC2 students were identical ($Mdn = 4$, $IQR = 1$), representing a high level of positive perception. The analysis revealed no statistically significant difference between the groups ($U = 48918$, $Z = 0.091$, $p = .928$, $r = -.004$), with a very small effect size. These findings indicate that students in both groups perceived the AL instruction almost identically and very positively across its various dimensions, regardless of their proficiency levels.

In summary, findings indicate that both groups perceived the AL instruction positively. However, statistically significant differences between the two groups were identified in overall perceptions across the three instructional steps—Experiencing by Observing, Experiencing by Doing, and Reflection—as well as in evaluations of the instruction as a whole. Regarding instructional dimensions, only collaboration and interaction showed a significant difference. In all such cases, ATC2 students reported higher positive perceptions than ITC2 students.

6. DISCUSSION, IMPLICATIONS, LIMITATIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Drawing upon the quantitative and qualitative findings, pedagogical and research implications, along with the study's limitations, and recommendations for future research, are discussed as follows:

6.1 Pedagogical implications

According to Fink (2003), Experiencing by Observing and Doing, and Reflection are the key steps for AL. The results suggest that students with higher language proficiency and more linguistic resources demonstrate a greater affinity for the AL instruction than those at the lower level. This aligns with the findings of Cheng (2000) and Jones (1999), who argue that high-proficiency students are more responsive to AL because they possess the requisite language knowledge to navigate complex activities. This linguistic foundation enables them to participate with greater confidence, fully engaging in interactive and cognitively demanding tasks. In contrast, lower-proficiency students may struggle with complex, open-ended activities without sufficient scaffolding. This finding echoes Vygotsky's (1978) Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) and emphasizes the importance of instructional support (Wood et al., 1976). While ATC2 students—as they had sufficient vocabulary and higher proficiency—benefited from peer-led discussions in creating dialogues and role-plays with unpredictable elements, which promote deeper communicative competence (Ellis, 2003), ITC2 students required more structured interventions. Therefore, teachers should differentiate task design. For the Intermediate group, scaffolding is essential. For instance, in vocabulary lectures, meaning should be presented in students' L1 (Mandarin) to facilitate comprehension and retention (Latsanyphone & Bouangeune, 2009), with a limited set of approximately 40–60 words per lesson to prepare for weekly quizzes. When creating a dialogue, students should be provided with model sentences or dialogues and then asked to adapt them by

replacing certain words with newly learned vocabulary. Over time, scaffolding can be gradually reduced, allowing students to produce original sentences and dialogues more confidently. Additionally, rather than relying on monologues or reports, authentic video clips depicting everyday Thai conversations can further support learning by exposing students to real-life contexts. For the Advanced group, more intellectually challenging tasks are recommended to sustain motivation and prevent stagnation.

Regarding cultural and learning style considerations, Taiwanese students, like many Asian students, shaped by Confucian heritage traditions, are often accustomed to teacher authority and lecture-based instruction (Cheng, 2000; Cortazzi & Jin, 1996). Their reluctance to volunteer answers or participate actively may be attributed to a language barrier, lack of confidence, fear of making mistakes, and concerns about losing face. These findings align with a study by Chang (2011), which examined Taiwanese students' reticence and passivity in EFL classrooms, as well as Jackson (2002), who investigated the reticence of Chinese students in English-medium business classes at a university in Hong Kong. To address this issue, teachers should provide supportive feedback, cultivate rapport, and explicitly create a safe classroom environment that normalizes error-making as part of the learning process (Donaldson, 2023; Monteiro et al., 2021). The findings of this study further suggest that, despite their initial hesitancy, students responded positively to collaborative and interactive tasks when carefully structured. This demonstrates a gradual cultural shift: students who are initially reluctant to adopt active roles may adapt when they perceive their teachers as supportive and open-minded (Shaddad & Jember, 2024), and when their classmates are cooperative and encouraging (Liu & Carless, 2006; Shaddad & Jember, 2024). With these conditions, classrooms become more inclusive, and students feel safer and more confident to participate (Jackson, 2002).

In terms of collaborative work and pair forming, the findings show that pair work offered valuable opportunities for practicing Thai, improving speaking and listening skills, and building confidence. This is consistent with the Interaction Hypothesis (Long, 1996), which posits that language acquisition is facilitated through conversational interaction. Peer work activities, like pair or group work, provide opportunities for students to engage in authentic conversations, exposing them to various language styles, vocabulary, and communicative situations (Ellis, 2015). Yet, students' experiences also revealed challenges; mismatched motivation or personality sometimes led to discomfort or unequal workload, particularly in the Intermediate group, echoing concerns raised by Dörnyei and Murphey (2003) regarding group dynamics in language classrooms. Although random partner assignment promoted fairness and diversity of interaction, it was not always welcomed. Some students expressed a preference for occasional choice of partners. Prior studies suggest that a balance between random and strategic grouping (considering proficiency, motivation, and learner preferences) can optimize collaboration (Gillies, 2016; Webb, 2009). Students in ATC2 reported more positive outcomes overall, reflecting how higher proficiency and confidence reduce barriers in interaction. Nevertheless, challenges with unmotivated peers persisted, underscoring the need for clear accountability structures in collaborative tasks, not only within academic contexts but also in preparation for future professional environments (Pfaff & Huddleston, 2003; Slavin, 2014). Effective assessment of collaborative work should include both individual and team performance (Johnson & Johnson, 1999; Rosen et al., 2008). Taken together, these results suggest that group formation in TFL classrooms should be flexible, combining random assignment with selective grouping and occasional student choice. Such practices, when supported by teacher scaffolding and a safe classroom environment (Cortazzi & Jin, 1996; Jackson, 2002), can maximize the benefits of collaborative learning while minimizing risks of unequal participation.

In addition, instead of having additional tutorial classes run by Thai teaching assistants (TAs), the teacher might consider inviting TAs to attend the second session of each week to support students during dialogue-creation activities. In this way, TAs can serve as authentic linguistic and cultural resources, complementing the teacher's role and ensuring students receive timely support during the tasks. Research on native speaker assistants in foreign language classrooms indicates that they can assist by reducing the teacher-student ratio, offering more individual support, and contributing authentic communicative context (Moloney & Ross, 2010).

6.2 Research implications

This study explored students' perceptions of their learning experiences during AL instruction. Since the findings are based solely on students' subjective perceptions, future research should incorporate measures of actual learning outcomes in addition to perceived learning (Bacon, 2016). Subsequent research may adopt a quasi-experimental design to evaluate instructional effectiveness more rigorously after refining each stage of the instruction. Moreover, the inclusion of systematic classroom observations is recommended to assess students' behavioural engagement during AL instruction, thereby triangulating self-reported perceptions with observable participation patterns (Lu & Watanapokakul, 2025).

Also, as the current study was limited to the ITC2 and ATC2 courses, a replication study involving students from Elementary Thai conversation courses is recommended. Comparative analyses across the three

proficiency levels would offer a more comprehensive understanding of how learners at different developmental stages experience and respond to AL instruction.

In addition, the instructional framework developed in this study may be applied to conversation courses in other Southeast Asian languages, such as Vietnamese and Indonesian, which are offered within the same departmental context. Investigating the effectiveness of this instruction across different language courses would contribute to a broader understanding of its applicability and adaptability. A comparative analysis of the results across Thai, Vietnamese, and Indonesian would further enhance the understanding of AL in multilingual instructional settings.

Finally, the instructional model may be implemented in Thai conversation courses for foreign learners in other national contexts. A cross-cultural comparative study examining how students in different educational and cultural environments perceive and respond to the same AL framework would provide valuable insights into its transferability, contextual sensitivity, and potential for broader international application.

7. CONCLUSION

This study explored undergraduate students' perceptions of the implementation of AL instruction in Intermediate and Advanced Thai Conversation courses at a public university in Taiwan. Findings show that students across both proficiency levels reported consistently high to very high levels of positive perceptions of all instructional steps—Lecture, Experiencing by Observing, Vocabulary Quiz, Experiencing by Doing, and Reflection—and key dimensions of the overall instruction—including engagement, collaboration, intellectual engagement, learning effectiveness, and overall satisfaction. However, several statistically significant differences emerged. In particular, ATC2 students demonstrated higher positive perceptions in the instructional steps of Experiencing by Observing, Experiencing by Doing, and Reflection, as well as in the key instructional dimension of collaboration and interaction. These differences suggest that students with higher Thai language proficiency benefit more readily from interactive and cognitively demanding AL activities, while intermediate-level learners are likely to require additional scaffolding to fully engage in such tasks. Overall, the findings highlight the potential of AL as a pedagogical approach for TFL conversation courses while underscoring the importance of supportive instructional design, culturally responsive teaching practices, and collaborative learning opportunities that encourage active participation.

DECLARATION

1. Conflict of interest

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

2. Generative AI and AI-assisted technologies in the writing process

ChatGPT 5.4 and Grammarly were used for language proofreading to improve the readability of the manuscript. After using this tool, the authors carefully reviewed and edited the content as needed and take full responsibility for the content of the published article.

3. Data availability statement

All data supporting the findings of this study are included within the article.

4. Ethics statement

This study was approved by the Institutional Review Board (IRB) of the university in Taiwan where the data were collected. Participation was entirely voluntary, and all participants were informed that they could withdraw from the study at any time without any impact on their academic grades.

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6. Contributor Role Taxonomy (CRediT)

Yuwadee Tirataradol: Conceptualization, Data curation, Formal analysis, Investigation, Methodology, Resources, Validation, Visualization, Writing – original draft, Writing – review & editing.

Suriya Sriphrom: Investigation, Resources, Validation, Visualization, Writing – review & editing.

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APPENDIX

Participants' Demographic Information

Items	Intermediate (n = 17)		Advanced (n = 13)		Total (n = 30)	
	Frequency	%	Frequency	%	Frequency	%
Gender						
Male	2	11.76	5	38.46	7	23.33
Female	15	88.24	8	61.54	23	76.67
Nationality						
Taiwanese	16	94.12	12	92.31	28	93.33
Non-Taiwanese	1	5.88	1	7.69	2	6.67
Current course enrollment						
Intermediate Thai Conversation II	17	100	0	0.00	17	56.67
Advanced Thai Conversation II	0	0.00	13	100	13	43.33
Age						
19	1	5.88	0	0.00	1	3.33
20	12	70.59	1	7.69	13	43.33
21	2	11.76	10	76.92	12	40.00
22	2	11.76	0	0.00	2	6.67
23	0	0.00	1	7.69	1	3.33
24	0	0.00	1	7.69	1	3.33
Thai as a single major						
Yes	15	88.24	10	76.92	25	83.33
No	2	11.76	3	23.08	5	16.67
Grade in the Thai Conversation Course in the previous semester (Semester 1/2024)						
A+	4	23.53	9	69.23	13	43.33
A	5	29.41	1	7.69	6	20.00
A-	4	23.53	1	7.69	5	16.67
B	2	11.76	1	7.69	3	10.00
B-	1	5.88	0	0.00	1	3.33
N/A	1	5.88	1	7.69	2	6.67
Score on the English section of the National Entrance Examination						
11	1	5.88	1	7.69	2	6.67
12	3	17.65	2	15.38	5	16.67
13	9	52.94	3	23.08	12	40.00
14	2	11.76	4	30.77	6	20.00
15	1	5.88	0	0.00	1	3.33
N/A	1	5.88	3	23.08	4	13.33
Self-rated Thai proficiency						
Beginner	7	41.18	3	23.08	10	33.33
Intermediate	9	52.94	7	53.85	16	53.33
Advanced	1	5.88	3	23.08	4	13.33
Self-rated English proficiency						
Beginner	3	17.65	0	0.00	3	10.00
Intermediate	10	58.82	7	53.85	17	56.67
Advanced	4	23.53	6	46.15	10	33.33
Studied Thai before university						
Yes	5	29.41	4	30.77	9	30.00
No	12	70.59	9	69.23	21	70.00

Note: N/A = Not Available