

# English for ALL by Albert Laurence

Piya Sailomraksa

Assumption University of Thailand

## Abstract

It is generally known that hi-school students in Thailand have different levels of English proficiency, owing to their educational background and English speaking environment. When they become students in a university where English is a medium of teaching and learning, some of them have shown worries in English language usage. Traditional classroom learning of English does not alleviate worries for these students. From the research of student's needs in 2008, conducted by Student Affairs (SA) of Assumption University (AU), 47.8% of AU freshmen had selected English language as the first probable obstacle in studying in AU. As a result, SA has introduced a new program called "English for All by Albert Laurence", which is designed to be an activity-based English program. The program aims to develop student's confidence in English communication and to promote self-directed learning concept, which was developed from 7 steps to English Proficiency, initiated by Rev. Bro. Dr. Bancha Saenghiran, President of Assumption University.

English for ALL is a 25 hour training program offered to freshmen for free of charge. Activities in the program include Conversation, Listening Comprehension, Learning Personality, Creative Writing, Pronunciation, Presentation, and Studio News Reading Experience. Students in the program are assessed for their confidence in English communication before and after the program. It is found that students have a significant change in confidence in English usage at the end of the program. Students show a high level of satisfaction towards the program's curriculum and teachers. "English for ALL" is a new and effective method of learning English in which students can enjoy fun activities while practicing their English skills with the close monitoring of SA personnel throughout 25 hours of training. The program can be developed as an innovative model to improve student's confidence in English communication for ESL and EFL University.

## Background

English is an important means of communication, especially in the era of globalization. The quality of higher education was one of the major issues raised in the World Conference on Higher Education organized by UNESCO in 1988 in Paris (Wang and Kim 2000). Educational institutions, driven by the demands of society, are increasingly embracing English language learning. (Nation, 2013) With the upcoming economic integration in 2015 to form ASEAN Economic Community (AEC), there have been many movements towards preparing Thailand for open trade with our neighbors. One of the biggest concerns

among Thais is the use of English as the common language. Since the beginning of ASEAN, English has been selected as the working language among ASEAN communities. There are many ways to measure language proficiency, one of which is by using English Proficiency Index (EPI). It is a product of EF Education First, a global language training company, and draws its conclusions from data collected via online English tests available for free over the internet. Among the countries in Asia, the study shows that all over Asia, Thailand's ranking is only above Kazakhstan. Leading the regional league is Malaysia with

a score of 58.99 score, followed by Singapore. The others - India, Hong Kong, South Korea, Indonesia, Japan, Vietnam, Sri Lanka, Taiwan and China - are all over 50 points, while Thailand gained only 44.44. Thailand has been ranking one of the lowest proficiency scores of the countries obtained in the study. According to where is Thailand Website 2012, Regardless of the ranking, it has become obvious that an average Thai is considered to have very low English proficiency. Recent online events and anecdotal evidences prove that Thais tend to be unwilling to converse in English and often revert back to use Thais among themselves. The readers probably also have experienced that Thais who are fluent in English are not common, and those that speak flawless English are considered very rare. With the upcoming AEC economic integration, bilingual and multilingual individuals will be very advantageous at finding job positions and getting promotions. Many school systems now require English study starting in primary school, much as they do math or science. University professors are delivering lectures in English to prepare their students better for life after graduation.

Assumption University (AU) is the first international university in Thailand. AU is a private Catholic university with three campuses in the Hua Mak, Central World Plaza in downtown Bangkok and Suvarnabhumi areas of Samut Prakan Province, Thailand. The university is led by the Brothers of St. Gabriel, who have been active in education in Thailand since 1901. Assumption University is noted for attracting large numbers of foreign students from 89 nations around the world. AU is using English as a medium of Teaching and Studying with all courses except Communication in Thai and Thai Laws. The Institute for English Language at Assumption University (IELE) offers

several solutions for preparing students to meet the challenges of attending an international University. Intensive courses, also offered by IELE), are preparatory courses for incoming freshmen students. The course aims at extending the students' knowledge of vocabulary, revising basic structures of English, and reinforcing all the four language skills: Creative reading and writing will be introduced through communicative activities. Requisite to the needs of the student, the Intensive English Program is offered in three different configurations, from 30 to 120 hours in length. The final examination of Intensive English courses are also served as a placement test to pass students to Basic English course, English 1, English 2, English 3 or English 4. AU students are required to complete English 4 as a prerequisite course to study some courses in a junior and a senior year and a requirement for graduation.

From the research of student's needs after Intensive English courses in 2008, conducted by Student Affairs (SA) of Assumption University (AU), 47.8% of AU freshmen had selected English language as the first probable obstacle in studying in AU, followed by Adjustment to College Life (12%), and Overall Expenditures (17.5%) respectively. Traditional classroom learning of English does not alleviate worries for these students. (Vaughn, 2007) All students, but English language learners in particular, need many and varied opportunities to practice their skills with assistance from the teacher as well as independently (Grabe, 1991; McLaughlin, 1987). Students who have received explicit instruction and guided practice can then practice the skills and strategies they have learned through student-directed activities such as peer tutoring and cooperative learning (Muniz-Swicegood, 1994). In this view, this theory related to English language learners agrees with

Student Affairs' Experiential Learning theories. Experiential Learning Theory defines learning as "the process whereby knowledge is created through the transformation of experience. Knowledge results from the combination of grasping and transforming experience" (Kolb, 1984, p. 41). Grasping experience refers to the process of taking in information, and transforming experience is how individuals interpret and act on that information. The ELT model portrays two dialectically related modes of grasping experience—Concrete Experience (CE) and Abstract Conceptualization (AC) -- and two dialectically related modes of transforming experience—Reflective Observation (RO) and Active Experimentation (AE). This process is portrayed as an idealized learning cycle or spiral where the learner "touches all the bases"—experiencing (CE), reflecting (RO), thinking (AC), and acting (AE)—in a recursive process that is sensitive to the learning situation and what is being learned.

### **Introduction to English for ALL by Albert Laurence**

In the year of 2005, Student Affairs of Assumption University has introduced a new program called "English for All by Albert Laurence" (E4ALL), which is designed to be an activity-based English program. The program aims to develop student's confidence in English communication and to promote self-directed learning concept, which was developed from 7 steps to English Proficiency, created by Rev. Bro. Dr. Bancha Saenghiran, President of Assumption University. English for All by Albert Laurence" (E4ALL), is a 25 hour training program offered to freshmen for free of charge. Activities in the program include Conversation, Listening Comprehension, Learning Personality, Creative Writing, Pronunciation,

Presentation, and Studio News Reading Experience. The abbreviation "E4ALL" has its name originated from the following factors of the course. The initial "E" represents "English", while no. 4 represents 4 basic skills of English communication which are listening, speaking, reading and writing. Possessing the skills, one needs to practice them regularly. The course developers added the ALL which represents the Albert Laurence Learning Model or the 7 steps English proficiency that was introduced to students in 2007 as a learning guide in university brochures for freshmen. The introduction to 7 Steps to English Proficiency views Imitation is a new born child's way of learning its mother's tongue in a natural way. A newborn baby first imitates its mother in the language communicated. The ability of a child to communicate to others remains latent till it is developed through daily observation and use. Every minute of the hour, every hour of the day, and every day of the year, child observes, listens and mumbles so as to learn the language of its mother. This is the first school a child goes through. The teaching methodology is natural and it is one of the best means employed in teaching English to learn the four skills of listening, speaking, reading and writing. To really master four skills, this natural method can be fostered. A child is always with its mother, and imitates the way she uses the language. A child observes, listens, and records what has been heard. Then, he proceeds to imitate what he observes and listens (Bancha Saenghiran, 2010). The 7 steps include: Reading, Listening, Reading Aloud, Writing, Speaking and Speech Delivery, Learning English from Daily Life and Presentation, respectively.

Step 1: Reading -- Read one passage a day! Choose the passage from a piece of English literature, book or magazine you like. Try to master three to five new words a day. Write

those new words down in a notebook in the contexts you find them to make sure you understand the meanings and you know how to use them in sentences. Do observe sentence structure. Begin slowly, bit by bit, to read short passages. Read longer passages as you gain more experience. Do review new words you wrote down from time to time and use them in your other writings.

Step 2: Listening -- Watch a movie on TV Watch and listen to news or news broadcast on radio or television. Find a movie or a TV show you like, in English, and study it scene by scene. Spend at least 15 minutes each time listening to an English program on TV beginning with news from CNN, BBC, CNBC, etc. Learn to be patient with yourself and try to understand the dialogue without needing to read subtitles. Keep working.

Step 3: Reading aloud! -- Read aloud one passage a day.

Read one passage aloud from an English text. Try to put proper intonation imitating what you heard from English sound track on TV or radio program. Keep working till you sound more and more like an English native speaker. You can also occasionally listen to yourself by tape-recording your voice or request other person to comment on it.

Step 4: Writing -- Write one passage a day. If you have free time, with a pen and a sheet of paper, try to give yourself practice in writing. You can write on any topic beginning with an easy topic relating your daily life. Increase the level of difficulty and also the length of your essay each day. Try to think in English and write in English. Make writing in English a regular habit so that it comes naturally. To make sure that your writing is correct; you must request someone who knows English well to review your writing and to point out mistakes and help you correct the sentences. You must learn from your mistakes but try not to repeat mistakes again. From time to time,

compare your present writing to the previous ones to see its improvement.

Step 5: Speaking and Speech Delivery. Prepare your own speech and deliver it! This exercise will enable you to write and speak. First, you have to write your speech on any topic of your choice. Make use of the same procedure as in Step 4. Once you have your speech ready, then, you try to give yourself a training in delivering that speech. Be careful not to learn the passage by heart. It is better to remember the key ideas in sequence. Deliver your speech in front of a mirror pretending that you have a large audience before you. Practice twice or thrice or more to acquaint yourself with speech delivery. If possible, you can tape record your speech so that it can be replayed on TV screen. You can observe your performance and you can improve on it.

Step 6: Learn English from your daily life -- Be inquisitive! You will come across many new words or phrases each day when you move from one place to the other. The word may be from a signboard, advertisement, newspaper, magazine, posters, etc. Pick up words that interest you and master those words. If you come across these words often, you will absorb these words as a part of your vocabulary unknowingly. In this way, you can sustain your passion for English.

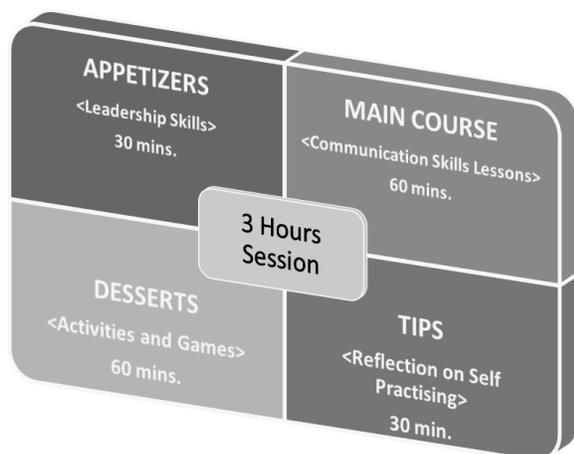
Step 7: Presentation Do your own presentation at least once or twice a semester or you can prepare paper presentation and deliver it to a class at least once a semester. You have to prepare contents and put it in an essay form. To make content preparation easier, you can summarize the contents from a book, passage from a newspaper, etc. Then, learn to present your work in front of a mirror pretending there is an audience listening to you.

The English for ALL by Albert Laurence is organized by Student Affairs of Assumption University. From the survey of 10

universities in Thailand, randomly chosen, it is found that all of the English training programs are rendered by either inside the faculty itself of Academic Affairs or the English Language Institute in those universities. The numbers of members are instantly increasing since the program has established. There were 57 students passed the program in the first year, 113 students in 2009, 129 students in 2010, 164 students in 2011, 162 students in 2012, and 220 students in 2013 respectively. That made the total of 845 students participated in the program in 5 years.

### English Buffet

Teaching team of the course are using a restaurant theme to introduce a new concept of “English Buffet” which students will be handed with a menu of lessons and activities, and students can choose what they would like to study for next class, according to their own level of competencies, and interests. Teachers and students will have one week to prepare activities and material. So every single class will be fresh, exciting and enthusiastic for both teachers and students. The new design of English for All class is a 3-hours-class management consists of Restaurant’s Menu of Appetizers, Main course, Desserts and Tips activities.



Appetizers activities are served for First 30 minutes. The content of Appetizers is engaged with the introduction to concept of Leadership, introduced by Stephen R. Covey in the book of “The Leader in Me”. President of Assumption University, founder of 7 steps to English Proficiency, believes that the concept of “Leader in Me” will help students to gradually develop self-confidence and esteem in studies, improve student achievement, and develop a personality that can be comprehend with multi-cultural society.

Main Course activities include English communication skills such as Conversation, Listening Comprehension, Learning Personality, Career Planning, Creative Writing, Pronunciation, and Presentation. These intensive lessons will take another 60 minutes of the class.

Dessert activities are serving for next 60 minutes. The program introduced games and activities that are comprehend with the skill lessons they have studied from previous hours. Students can choose games and activities according to their needs of development by simply looking at the skill parameter. English Buffet Parameters are diagrams that show the estimated result from practicing certain games and activities in English Buffet Menu. Since each activity attribute different dimensions and scales of development, the parameter will show how the certain activity improve student’s skills in Listening, Writing, Speaking, and Reading in different scales. By looking at the English Buffet Parameters, students will be able to estimate how far they can improve by participating in that activity.

The last 30 minutes of the class management is called “Tips”. This period is for reflection of the assignments. Students and teachers are free to ask questions, and make a comment to help students develop their English communication skills individually. Students will be assigned to practice

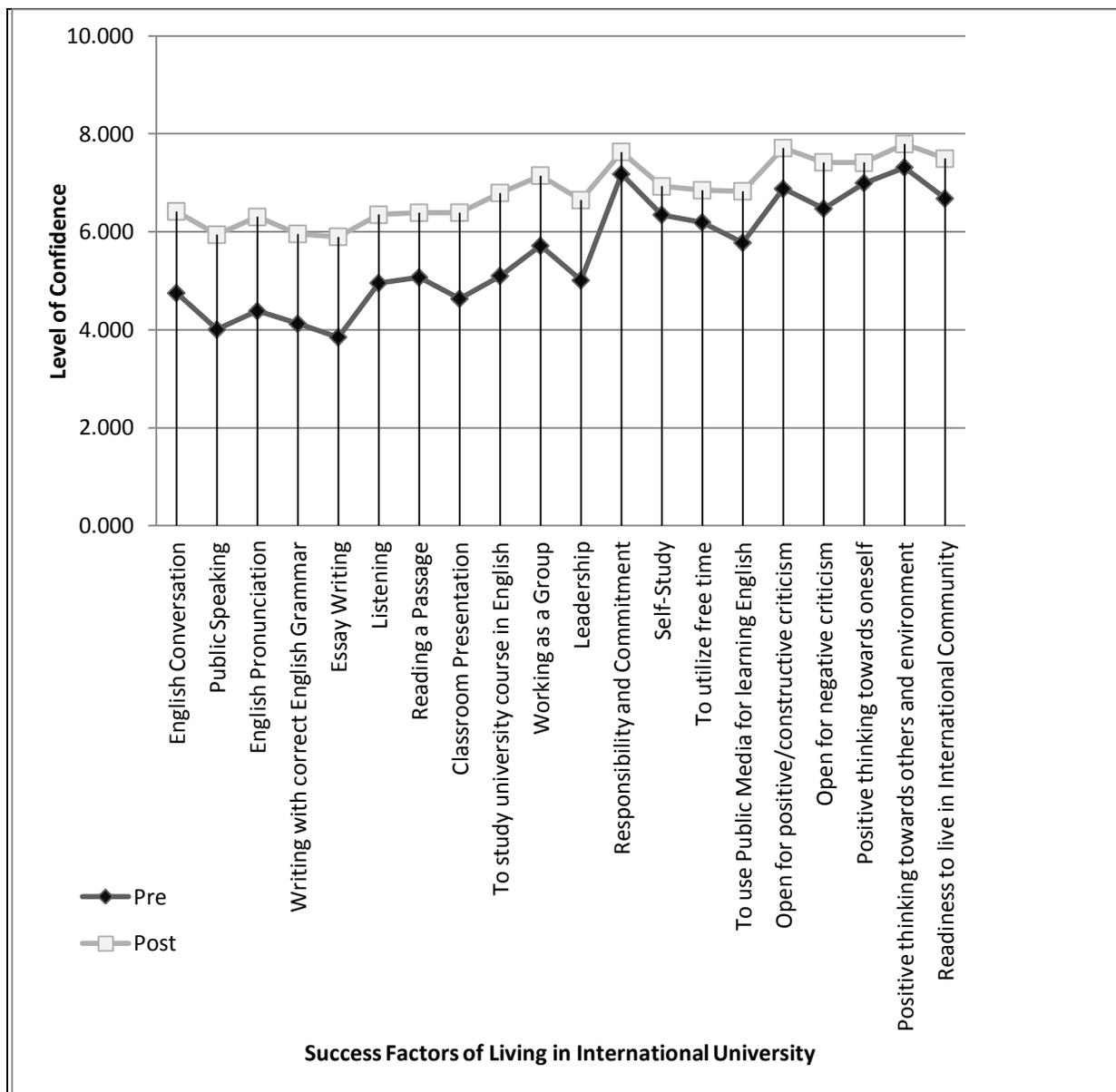
listening with audio clips weekly at home and write the reflection notes based on what they have listened. Students are equipped with scripts, vocabularies guide and short notes for each clip they listen. The following diagram shows examples of English Buffet Parameter.

### Course Evaluation

To pass the program, students have to complete the requirement of 70% of 25 hours attendance and 70% of the final presentation graded by class facilitators. Students who pass the requirement will receive a certificate of achievement from Student Affairs of Assumption University. All students in the course were asked to complete a test at the end of the program. The survey includes satisfaction towards course curriculum, satisfaction towards program teacher, development of 4 skills in the program, study of student’s confidence in English language and study of perception towards self confidence in success factors to live in International University. From Academic year 2012’s result, Student’s Satisfaction towards Course Curriculum showed the highest level of satisfaction or the average of 86.75% (4.33 on 5 Scales). Student’s Satisfaction towards Teacher of the program shows the highest level of satisfaction or the average of 91.25% (4.56 on 5 Scales) Student’s Opinion towards 4 skills Development during the course showed an average of 84.8% “Very much developed” (4.24 on 5 Scales) which are Listening 85.4% (4.27), Speaking 87% (4.35), Reading 86% (4.30), and Writing 81% (4.05). The study of Student’s Confidence in English language usage shows a scientific significant development (Significant difference at 0.001) of student’s confidence after participation to the program.

		Paired Differences				t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	
		Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference				
					Lower				Upper
Pair 1	Pre-Test - Post-Test	-0.1814	0.29	0.0411	-0.2639	-0.0988	-4.412	50	<b>.001</b>

The study of Self- Perception towards Level of Confidence in success factors to live in International University is a self-test designed and under the development by Learning Support Center, Student Affairs. The purpose of the assessment is to study the development of student’s confidence in each factor which is considered as a skill to adjust oneself to an International University where English is used as a medium of language. 20 factors in the test includes student’s confidence in English Conversation, Public Speaking, English Pronunciation, Writing with correct English Grammar, Essay Writing, Listening, Reading a Passage, Classroom Presentation, To study university course in English, Working as a Group, Leadership, Responsibility and Commitment, Self-Study, To utilize free time, To use Public Media for learning English, Open for positive/constructive criticism, Open for negative criticism, Positive thinking towards oneself, Positive thinking towards others and environment, and Readiness to live in International Community, respectively. The following table shows the development of confidence in 20 factors before and after the program.



The result of different scores between Pre-test and Post-test of Student's Confidence in relations to 20 factors shows positive development of confidence in each factor after the English for ALL by Albert Laurence program. The first 5 highest improved factors on the scale of 10 include Essay Writing (+2.050), Public Speaking (+1.936), English Pronunciation (+1.921), Writing with correct English Grammar (+1.835) and Classroom Presentation (+1.758), respectively. The least development factors are positive thinking towards oneself, responsibility and commitment, and positive thinking towards others and environment. Yet, they have shown the development on the average of +0.415, +0.456, +0.479 respectively.

## **Discussion and Recommendation**

Ebata has discussed in her article named “Motivation Factors in Language Learning” that self-confidence is the most significant in language-learning. It provides learners with the motivation and energy to become positive about their own learning. It also creates the drive in them to acquire the targeted language, enjoy the learning process, and experience real communication. At the heart of all learning is a person’s belief in his or her ability to accomplish the task. In general, successful language learners appear to have higher self-esteem than those who are unsuccessful. Lack of belief in one’s ability hinders him from achieving that task—pursuing a targeted language accomplishment. Moreover, it is widely believed that once students gain self-confidence, it progressively expands, in conjunction with experiencing success and satisfaction as well as good relationships. The program is encouraging students to have confidence in English communication through activities that enhance their ability in reading, writing, listening and speaking. And as a result, students are more capable in communicating in English in other aspects of university life. The program is suitable for college education where students are seeking new way to learn English. One of truly exceptional characteristics of Student Affairs personnel is caring and supporting, which plays an important role in rendering this program. Teachers have to understand different background and culture of each student in class. The more we connect to student, the better result of the program, as it is shown in the result that students were satisfied with the program as well as the facilitators or teachers. In 2012, the program has introduced a website [www.e4all.au.edu](http://www.e4all.au.edu) and Google Docs to support application, recruiting membership, promoting the program and evaluation of student’s development through on-line testing. The website is well-received with the 2,000 visitors in the first year and another 5,000 visitors in the year later.

I would like to recommend universities that are using English as a medium of communication to develop an activity-based program which is similar to Assumption University’s English for ALL by Albert Laurence as new way of learning English in the campus. It is at its best when individual university can apply one’s culture, traditions, local beliefs, creative stories and facilities to create activities for the program. Students have a direct experience, learn, conceptualize, reflect and enjoy the program as it also serves as a promotion of the concept of Experiential Learning that we are practicing in Student Affairs.

## References

- Bancha Saenghiran (2010, July).** Bro.Bancha's Collection. Retrieved November 2013, from Assumption University Library: <http://library.au.edu/bro-bancha/interview9-1.html>
- Ebata, M. (2008).** Motivation Factors in Language Learning. The Internet TESL Journal .
- Grabe, William. (1991).** Current developments in second language reading research. TESOL . Quarterly. 25 (3): 375-406.
- Kolb, D.A. (1984).** Experiential learning: Experience as the source of learning and development. New Jersey: Prentice-Hall.
- McLaughlin, B. 1987.** Theories of second language learning. London: Edward Arnold.
- Muñiz-Swicegood, M. (1994.)** The effects of metacognitive reading strategy training on the reading performance and student reading analysis strategies of third grade bilingual students. Bilingual Research Journal. 18 (1) 83-97.
- Nation, T. (2013, November 7).** Thailand ranks near bottom in English proficiency: survey. Retrieved January 31, 2014, from <http://www.nationmultimedia.com/business/Thailand-ranks-near-bottom-in-English-proficiency--30218895.html>
- Vaughn, S. L.-T. (2007, August).** Research-Based Methods of Reading Instruction for English Language Learners. Retrieved January 2014, from ASCD: [http://www.ascd.org/publications/books/108002/chapters/Research-Based\\_Practices\\_for\\_English\\_Language\\_Learners.aspx](http://www.ascd.org/publications/books/108002/chapters/Research-Based_Practices_for_English_Language_Learners.aspx)
- Wang, Y. and Kim, C-H. 2000.** "Quality assurance, credit transfer and mutual recognition in higher education--Role on Quality Assurance in Higher Education: Standard, Mechanisms and Mutual Recognition. Bangkok, Thailand, 8-10 November 2000
- Where is Thailand in English Proficiency? (2012, July 25).** Retrieved February 2, 2014, from Where is Thailand: <http://whereisthailand.info/2012/07/english-proficiency/>