Connecting Practical Theories and Practices of Teaching Grammar in CLT-English-Language Student-Teachers' Practicum Experiences in Southernmost Thailand

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Abstract

The challenge for teacher professional development (TPD) to achieve the educational reform agenda demands that teacher educators play an innovative role in connecting teachers' theory-practice gaps. The study investigates the personal practical theories (PPTs) of the English- language (EL) student-teachers about grammar instruction during their initial experiences in the university's school-based practice course and explores how they apply the Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) - a prescribed approach to teaching EL, imposed by Thailand's national curriculum. Phrase one utilized the self-survey questionnaire to retrieve PPTs about grammar instruction from twenty-six EL student-teachers from Yala Rajabhat University during their fieldwork practicum in Thailand's southernmost schools. In phase two, the four critical samples were observed in their twelve classrooms regarding grammar roles in EL instructional practices. Findings show that before the practicum, the participants held the CLT-oriented PPTs, showing a certain commitment to applying CLT theory into practice. However, the aspects of formal instruction of the grammar and grammar-focused error correction observed in their teaching practices were not compatible with their professed PPTs. The Thai EL student-teachers' practices were driven by a core perception that grammar is the foundation for communication unsupportive to CLT. This study recommends that teacher education should employ the innovative strategy of reflective practice in promoting the student-teachers' PPTs and practices early in the practicum course. To enhance teachers' learning to teach in an innovative way and warrant the success of instructional reform, the insightful understanding of teachers' cognition should be taken as a crucial component of teacher education.

Keywords: *Teacher Professional Development (TPD), English Language Teaching (ELT), Teacher Cognition, Personal Practical Theory (PPT), Communicative Language Teaching (CLT)*

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Thailand's English language Education Reform and Need for Innovative Teaching.

Since 2008, Thailand's national education policy for the Basic Education Level has officially, greatly reformed the entire syllabus of English language subjects by imposing 'English language for communication' as the prime learning achievement (OBEC, 2008). Correspondingly, English Language (EL) teachers have been directed to employ Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) in practice to ascertain the success of learners' communicative competence. Hence, English language teaching (ELT) in Thailand, where English is a foreign language (EFL) and is taught as a subject rather than a communication tool, has been confronting a big challenge of making a change in the way of teaching and learning practices. Schools' EL teachers were obliged to change their practices from the traditional grammar-translation method (GTM) and the Audi-lingual method (ALM) to be CLT. However, studies about EL teaching in Thai schools reported failure in teaching with CLT that grammar-based teaching and form-focused lessons are still the predominant features in most EL classrooms (e.g., Ketamon, 2016; Noom-Ura, 2013). This grammar-based teacher's traditional practice problem is commonly observed in other EFL classroom contexts, e.g., Ethiopia and China (Tsehay, 2017; Wang, 2010). Thai EL classrooms were observed in the previous studies to be embedded with grammar exercises and rote-learning of linguistics rules, resulting in the learners' inabilities in EL communication (e.g., Kwon, 2017; Phatharawisetphan, 2016). To effectively apply CLT, teachers are required to create an interactive, real-like setting for the learners to use language in near-genuine communicative activities. Teachers need to make the learners consider the language in terms

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of the communicative functions that it performs, rather than, in terms of its structures and linguistic items. According to the CLT principle, manipulating language structures is not the key strategy for learning to communicate. In this regard, teachers must develop strategies to direct learners to relate grammar structures and rules to their grammar functions to achieve the ability to use language for communication. Studies empirically found that inexperienced teachers generally did not change the way they taught but continued to follow old patterns (Phipps, 2009). Teachers' overt teaching of grammar was commonly found in Thai EL classrooms country-wide (Noom-Ura, 2013; Teng & Sinwongsuwat, 2015; Ulla, 2018), including the teachers and student-teachers in southern Thailand (Pratya, Sorat & Sharfuddin, 2018; Rashid, Abdul Rahman & Yunus, 2017). The EL student-teachers (STs) are naive in practice and so might struggle to effectively utilize CLT, the new instructional approach, due to their unpractical knowledge of teaching as well as their familiarity with the traditional grammar-directed aspect of EL classrooms. Thus, to ascertain the student teacher's ability to teach, teacher educators are obliged to ground them not only in the knowledge but also in the constructive perception that will lead to their pedagogical knowledge and personal theory about practice (König, 2012).

1.2 Teacher Education Role in Promoting Teachers' Practical Theories and Practices

Teacher education is obliged to foster student teachers' professional development to maintain the quality of teaching and learning. This includes promoting the STs' basic knowledge and constructive perception for accomplishing any educational reform agenda. It is noted that any reform for teaching innovations poses a significant challenge for novice teachers due to their naive experience in refining their personalized practice (Li, 2013) So, what student-teachers think about teaching and learning should be acknowledged early during initial teacher training. Research on *teacher cognition* -what teachers know, think, and believe (Borg, 2009) suggests that what teachers do in classrooms is guided by the *pedagogical beliefs* that they have built up extensively through their school experience (e.g., Borg, 2009; Richardson, 2003). Based on the underlying beliefs, prior experiences, values, and conceptions, when interacting with a new context, teachers personalize the *practical theory* they perceive as *practical* for their particular teaching setting (Levin & He, 2008). This teacher's personal practical theory, or PPT, is not scientific knowledge but the personal ideas established as a result of an attempt to make sense of what theory, concept, and knowledge should be applied in practice (Bloom& He, 2013; Chant, 2009). According to An (2016), it is these teachers' individualized theories of teaching and learning that guide their instructional design and delivery, not the official theories they gained from the college. Hence, understanding student-teachers' PPTs enables the teacher educators to be more aware of the STs' ongoing decisions and rationales in practice and so can empower the STs to become reflective practitioners (Levin & He, 2008). In this sense, PPTs will serve the functions of describing, explaining, and predicting the possible outcomes of teaching. By identifying PPT, supervisors can become more reflective in applying effective approaches to advising and coaching on how to teach in their particular supervision contexts (Hutson, Bloom, & He, 2009). Teacher education should be prompted to gain insight into how the STs will construct, experience, and reconstruct their PPTs of teaching (Richardson, 2003). As Elbaz (2018) raised concern, curriculum development is a linear process that ends kept separate from means, resulting in the theory-practice gap which, consequently brings about the problem of how to apply theory into practice. If teacher education requires novice teachers to change their teaching innovatively, recognition that their own well-established personal theories may either impede or enhance their progress in teaching is required.

1.3 Study Context - English Education in Thailand's southern provinces

One of the challenges in developing English education in southern Thailand's provinces, specifically, in Yala, Pattani, and Narathiwat, was the limited access to EL educational facilities and a shortage of qualified English language teachers (Ketamon, 2016; Liow, 2010). This was an effect of the political unrest that was initiated in 2004. Typically, the EL STs in this area have distinct characteristics in *language use* and linguistic culture that should be considered instrumental factors influencing their EL learning and teaching achievement. First, they have limited exposure to realistic settings of English-

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language communication and can merely experience it in English classes in schools. Second, they are the Thai-Malay bilinguals who started to be exposed to Thai (the school's official classroom language) as their second language later on, in addition to their native Malay language, when they entered their secular schools. Studies found the Malay speaking students in the three southern border schools appeared to face greater difficulty with classroom communication, which is not their familiar native language (Liow, 2010; Nookua, 2011); and this potentially had a negative effect on their learning achievement in a certain extent (Nookua, 2011). Their linguistic disadvantage in these aspects hampered not only their learning achievement toward communicative competence (Littlewood, 2014) but also their capacities in teaching with CLT as a consequence (Islam & Bari, 2012; Richards & Rodgers, 2014). The empirical evidence indicates that language teachers' subject matter knowledge, and language command, are the main determinants of their pedagogical skills and perception in implementing instructional practice (Borg, 2009) and are more influential than intended school policy or reformed policy (Richardson, 2003). Hence, promoting the constructive PPTs toward the reformed pedagogy of CLT would be more challenging. English teacher education in this linguistically disadvantaged context, hence, vitally requires an insightful understanding and more comprehensive examination of the STs' PPTs and practices. Thus, this research sets out to explore the PSTs' personal practical theories about the imposed national reformed pedagogy of CLT and the extent to which they apply these PPTs into actual practice in respect to their language background and experiences since it may provide insight into their achievements in teaching practicum vital as the valuable source of teacher education development.

2. Objectives

2.1 Theoretical Framework

The research framework draws on previous studies on the relationship between teacher practice and teacher cognition—what teachers know, think, and believe (Borg, 2009) and how teacher applies cognitive linguistics to language teaching (Tyler, 2008). The theoretical notion is that "the study of the teachers' thinking processes—how they gather, interpret, and evaluate data—is expected to lead to an understanding of the uniquely human processes that determine teacher behaviour" (Kagan, 1992; p.130). As Johnson (2009) asserts, classroom experience has been shown to have a powerful influence on teachers' practical knowledge and their ability to adjust their practice. Borg (2009), in his study on teachers' practices in English grammar teaching, shows that the psychological, and environmental factors during classroom practice can widen the gap between teachers' theories and practices. This implies that teachers construct their personal theory while confronting these surrounding factors and challenging their employment of the prescribed syllabus in practice.
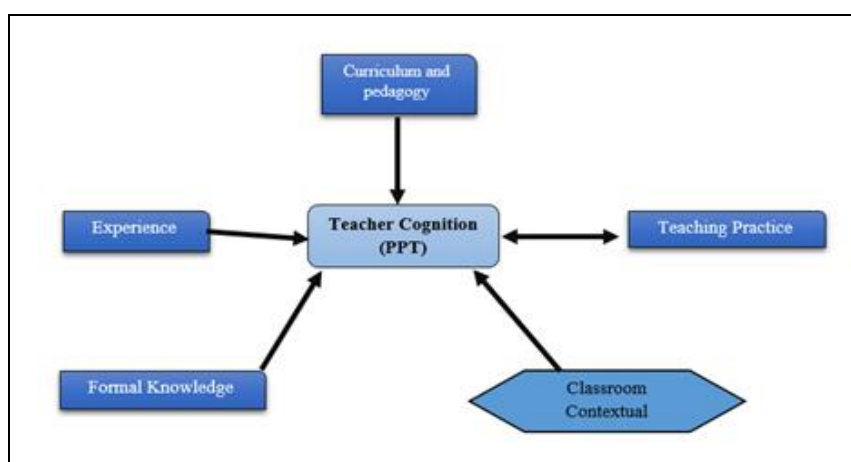

Figure 1 Model of teachers' cognition in practicum context.

Figure 1 displays the system of teachers' cognition, sources of beliefs, and personal practical theory (PPT) before the practicum (teacher formal knowledge, past school experiences), factors at practicum stages (the prescribed curriculum and pedagogy, and classroom contextual factors) and its relationship with teaching practice. The theoretical framework of this study is an exploration of more insights into the impact of teacher education, practicum contextual factors, and teacher's thinking validation on the growth of EL STs' personal practical theories and practices. This will lead to a better understanding of the teachers' development of their PPTs and the application of PPTs into practice.

2.3 Research Questions

This study sets out to explore the EL STs' PPTs, practices, and instructional notions about CLT regarding grammar role and the extent to which these STs' PPTs translate into actual practice during the initial stage of practicum. The three main research questions are:

1. What are the personal practical theories (PPTs) about the CLT approach regarding grammar role, held by the EL STs when entering teaching practicum course?

2. How and to what extent did the EL STs apply their personal practical theories (PPTs) about CLT regarding grammar into practice?

3. What are the underlying reasons/justification for the EL STs' instructional decision?

3. Research Methodology

This study adopted mixed methods of quantitative and qualitative analysis, combining the benefits of exploratory study and phenomenological methods. The quantitative self-survey data informs the overall PPTs of STs and provides a mechanism for the selection of subgroups for qualitative observation of actions and explains this phenomenon. A phenomenological approach was adopted to explore how STs experience the phenomenon (e.g., curriculum reform, innovative practice). The observation data enables a better understanding of the STs' instructional practice and its reasons through an in-depth perspective of the teachers' PPTs, which leads to a better understanding of the phenomenon (Creswell & Poth, 2017). In this sense, qualitative data helps to yield sufficient data and confirm the data. The study context is the EL STs' experience during their school practicum when they initially experiment with translating teaching theory into practice.

3.1 Participants

Participants in the study are the twenty-six EL STs from Yala Rajabhat University. They were purposively selected based on being the fifth-year students who enrolled in the *Practicum course* during June–September 2020 to take the field-work practice at the schools in Thailand's southernmost provinces (Yala and Pattani). A small critical sample of the four STs, who held a 'high' level of personal practical theory in CLT was selected for the classroom observation phase. For ethical reasons, the pseudo names were given as Anas, Bismil, Cathy, and Darun. All participants in this study, including the four cases, provided informed consent for the researcher to collect survey data and observe their practices in English Communication classrooms.

3.2 Data Collection and Analysis Method

Instruments employed for data collection have three phases: first, to examine the personal practical theories of the twenty-six EL ST participants before the practicum; second, to record the STs' observed practices during the practicum; and third, to investigate the STs' justification for their instructional decision-making.

Phase 1-PPT inventory about CLT (PPT-CLT)

This instrument was adapted from the study of Karavas-Doukas (1998) about teachers' teaching beliefs toward CLT in Greece, where learners also have limited exposure to English use, similar to the participants in this study. The PPT inventory about CLT (PPT-CLT) is composed of CLT concept statements in two themes: (1) the role of grammar instruction (RG in short) and (2) error correction (EC in

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short). Each PPT-CLT questionnaire statement begins with the phrase "To teach with CLT in class, I believe that..." to elicit how each CLT concept about grammar is perceived by the STs. The twelve Likert-scale items include seven statements in the RG theme (e.g., "Grammar is a means of language learning, not an end in itself"); and five statements in the EC theme (e.g., "To correct all mistakes is a must to guarantee the learners' ability to use language"). To respond to the PPT-CLT inventory, the participants will read each statement and report their level of agreement with each concept by selecting the points on a scale ranging from 5 (strong agreement) to 1 (strong disagreement). The level of agreement with CLT was coded using Likert's scale coding. To figure out the PPTs of the STs towards CLT and grammar practices, the RG and EC mean score and standard deviation (S.D) were tabulated (See # 3 for Interval mean and sentiment level). This data was used for the selection of the critical sample of the STs who gained high PPTs ('High' to 'Very high' with mean scores over 3.51). Among the 11 STs who were screened as critical cases, 6 STs gave informed consent to participate in the observation phase, and finally, the four STs were purposively selected for this study.

Phase 2-Classroom Observation Form and CLT evaluation sheet

Data collection of classroom practices was utilized in two methods. First, during teaching practice, classroom observation was conducted using field notetaking with the aid of a voice recorder to capture and record all observable classroom behaviors and interactions regarding grammar roles before being transcribed into a descriptive written classroom transcription. Second, the descriptive observation data was analyzed through coding and manual analysis. Focus coding (Emerson, Fretz, & Shaw, 2011) was utilized to assess the STs' practices using two CLT evaluation sheets: grammar-focused coding and CLT-focused coding. The analysis framework was based on two frameworks of CLT schemes: i) grammar placement (Littlewood, 2014) for evaluating the grammar role and how it was placed in each teaching practice; and ii) the broad CLT themes (Harmer, 2007; Richards, 2005) for capturing the other features of CLT practices (e.g., classroom interaction and learners' roles) that would be accompanied with each practice. The other non-CLT aspects of practices (e.g., overemphasis on grammar rules and form, and correction on accuracy of form over meaning) were identified during this data analysis. At the final step, each case's expressed PPTs were compared with the salient aspects of each practice to identify the extent to which the STs apply their CLT PPTs to practices.

Phase 3: Stimulate-recall Open Questionnaire.

At each observation, a stimulated-recall open questionnaire entitled 'Why I taught it that way' was used to elicit the ST's self-reflection on his/her justification of his/her observed practices. The stimulated-recall inquiry is the method employed in this phase in order to retrieve the memory of what and how the STs implemented their practices. Once after each observation, the STs were asked to read the classroom transcription and review the audio clip of the particular observed class before answering the questions in the questionnaires. The stimulated-recall questions protocol was adapted from Gass and Mackey's methodology of introspection (Gass & Mackey, 2016) to stimulate the ST respondents to express (1) the underlying reasons they justify their practice and (2) the constraints they perceive as influencing their instructional decisions. Overall, the themes that emerged from the observation data were used to discuss the STs' orientation to CLT. The data were analyzed to provide an insight into their construction of instructional decision-making—personal practical theory.

4. Results and Discussion
4.1 Results
    4.1.1 Participant's profile

Table 1: Language Profiles (N =26)

	N=26 %(n)	The four cases
Language command		
Thai	15.4(4)	Darun
Bilingual (Thai - Malay)	83.6(22)	Anas, Bismil, Cathy

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	N=26 %(n)	The four cases
Frequency of use of English for Communication		
Always	3.8 (1)	-
Often	7.7 (2)	Cathy
Sometimes	50.0(13)	Anas, Bismil,
Rarely	38.5(10)	Darun
Never	0	-

Table 1 shows that most participants are bilinguals who use Thai and Malay for daily communication (83%). All 26 participants shared common characteristics of having a limited chance for English communication. About half of the STs "sometimes" used it and about 40% "rarely" used it. For the smaller population of the four ST cases, only Darun uses merely Thai, while the three samples are Thai- Malay speakers. The three cases reported a small chance to use English, except Cathy, who "often" speaks English with her parent, who is the school teacher of the English language.

4.1.2 Participants' PPTs

This research sets out to explore and explain the EL STs' PPTs about CLT and the extent to which their personal beliefs about CLT are translated into actual grammar teaching practice in a practicum context. Data shows the student-teachers' personal practical theories were not highly oriented to CLT.

Table 2 Personal Practical Theories toward CLT

CLT-themes	Level of PPTs				
	Participants(n=26)	The four cases(n=4)			
		Anas	*Bismil*	*Cathy*	*Darun*
Role of grammar instruction	Low	High	Very High	High	Very high
Error corrections	Moderate	High	High	Very high	High
Overall	Moderate	High	Very High	High	Very high

 # Interval means and sentiment level: 1.00 - 1.50 = Very low/1.51 - 2.50 = Low/2.51 – 3.50 = Moderate/
3.51 – 4.50 = High/4.51 – 5.00 = Very High

Data from the PPT-CLT survey questionnaires collected before the practicum, reveals the twenty-six EL STs, overall, did not highly agree with the CLT concept. Their degree of PPTs was at a "moderate" level (Means = 2.72/S. D = 0.5). Two main findings of their beliefs were noted. First, the STs generally reported a "low" degree of agreement in the CLT instruction of grammar (Means = 2.32, S.D. = 0.60) and a "moderate" level of error correction (Means = 3.13/S.D. = 0.5). Second, these two constructs of PPTs seem to be incongruent. A great example of a mismatch is that they endorsed the sub-aspects of grammar in "*indirect instruction of grammar*", yet, preferred to *"focus on grammatical accuracy"* and *"grammar-focused correction"* – one with a CLT concept and one with non-CLT. This inconsistency of their PPTs infers their "uncertain" advocacy of CLT. On the contrary, the consistently "high" to "very high" level of the four cases' PPTs on the two CLT themes of grammar indicates their strong commitment to teaching with CLT. The four selected cases are examples of CLT-oriented PPTs (levels ranging from "high" to "very high" level), implying that they earned a high commitment to teaching grammar and correcting errors with CLT methods.

4.1.3 STs' Observed Practices - The Four Cases

Results show the four STs who held a "high" level of PPTs on CLT did not correspondingly, highly apply their CLT-based PPTs about grammar to their practices. Before practicum, the four cases stated high agreement in CLT aspects of grammar instruction and error correction. In practice, most teaching practices were mostly equipped with the old-fashioned grammar-translation methods. The main

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non-CLT STs' practices are grammar-based explicit instruction and error correction that is focused on grammatical accuracy (i.e., sentence structure, grammar terminology, the spelling of words). Among the 12 observed classes, only one communicative activity (i.e., talking about food and ordering food in role-playing practice) was observed, and only two observations appeared to utilize some extent of CLT aspects, i.e., peer-learning and reading for comprehension. Two important findings of the phenomenon of the STs practices contradicting their CLT PPTs are:

Salient observed practice 1 - Formal grammar lesson accompanied by direct instruction and explicit grammar

Before the practicum, each of the four STs reported their PPTs about grammar instruction were highly in line with the CLT tenet. However, in practice, only one ST demonstrated CLT-based instruction of grammar. The main practice is that "grammar was treated as a pre-requisite foundation of communication". Among the twelve observations, only two were enriched with communicative aspects. One in which Anas organized a simulation of a KFC fast-food restaurant and asked two students to play the roles of the waiter and customer, and the students performed the role-playing by exchanging conversation in a near-natural manner. The whole practice was very dynamic in that students showed high enjoyment in taking the roles, and the communication was very fluid. Another communicative aspect is observed when Anas did not correct several pronunciation errors that a student unconsciously repeated during practicing ordering food by saying "Chi-kan" instead of "Chic-ken". Anas allowed the students to keep the flow of conversation running till the end, and so they successfully performed communication practice naturally. Anas, however, did not constantly apply CLT to practice. It appeared he turned his reading comprehension lessons into reading-aloud practices where the focus was on the accuracy of reading paces and pronunciation, which did not sufficiently proceed to comprehension of the text. He also inserted grammar rules to explain the word orders to highlight the sentence structure instead of comprehending the reading content. The other three STs, Bismil, Cathy, and Darun, demonstrated their practices did not align with their CLT PPTs about the direct instruction of grammar. In practice, they used grammar-based instructions with a direct presentation, presenting formal knowledge of grammar, such as an excessive explanation of rules and an overt focus on form and structure, such as "Do not forget the rules and structure pattern of this..." (Grammar terminology). In addition, they did not insert grammar functions for pupils to expose them to real communication. This indicates that they are strongly convinced of "teaching grammar for grammar". In Bismil's case, her inattention to communicative grammar appeared whilst she presented grammar rules and gave directions on grammar substitution drills, showing she believed in "grammar should be taught to master in grammar". Cathy was observed in two speaking lessons integrating direct teaching of grammar. For example, her grammar explanation of "if-conditional" rules was slightly comprehensible but ended at grammar rules. Darun turned her speaking lesson to teach grammar by translating grammar rules about present continuous and emphasizing adding "-ing" to the infinitive verbs (e.g., from "brush" to "brushing") in each sentence, but without mentioning the function of use for communicative purposes at all. Overall, the STs preferred to teach grammar to end at grammar mastery with a very slight focus on the language function of the communicative aspect, which is the key instrument of the Communicative Grammar approach (Harmer, 2007). Their practices were inconsistent with their pre-practicum PPTs that favored "communication precedes grammar." Overall, their CLT-oriented PPTs about the communicative features of grammar were not considerably applied in actual practice.

Salient observed practice 2 - Correction of errors with incomprehensible input and a focus on grammar

Observational data indicate that STs' classroom practices slightly supported their CLT pre-practicum PPTs about error correction. Only one ST was observed adopting the CLT way in correction error. The teacher-directed feature of correction was observed as the main aspect of correction. Most of the corrections were form-focused for accurate grammatical form and structure. Pupils focused on practicing grammar exercises and accurate pronunciation in speaking practice. There was evidence that the ST cases interrupted students' communication practice to force them to correct their grammar errors. For instance, Bismil, in a speaking class, stopped the role-playing of the two pupils and asked them to correct the errors

from "*This is...* a red carpet" to "*It is...* a red carpet.". This suddenly caused the students to stop their conversation flow and began to feel reluctant to continue their practice. This immediate correction causes a communication breakdown that discourages students' learning to communicate. According to CLT, this is a minor error that might not cause miscommunication. It appeared the pupils were distracted from their trial-and-errors of delivering their messages to focus on the accuracy of the *form* instead of keeping the pace of communication. Only two STs utilized a CLT way of error correction in two of the four observed classes. Cathy once gave the picture clue of the Christmas card to cue the language usage of the past event instead of the over-explanation of rules of grammar she did in the former observed class. Inauspiciously, this was observed once only at the first stage of language introduction; the rest of the class was full of grammar rules and rote-learning grammar exercises focusing on sentence structure. Another student-teacher, Anas, did not correct minor errors the students made during performing a role-playing activity (See 4.3.2). To a larger extent, findings show that during the practicum course, most observed classes were characterized by largely "*error-free practice*" indicating the STs' strong preference for the correction of language errors for accuracy. In CLT, fluency is often given prominence over accuracy as long as the activity of learning is communicative to keep students' meaningful learning as a means toward communicative competence (Littlewood, 2014). Table 3 - Pre-practicum PPTs, Practices, and Reasons, provides a summary of the major observed practices that did not correspond to the stated PPTs (See statements displayed with ❖)

    4.1.4 Reasons and Justification of instructional decision

    Observations indicate the EL STs' actual practices were not strongly guided by their personal practical theories declared as ideally planned at the pre-practicum. The post-observation data portrayed the significant data of the verbal justification underlying these inconsistencies between the theory and practices of the STs. Two examples of these important findings were noted. In explaining her implementation of grammar-focused correction and excessive focus on grammar rules and structures, Bismil stated that "*English grammar is complicated because it comes with different rules and patterns". Pupils will not be able to use accurate language if they are not good at grammar.* " Darun's reflection on her behavior in breaking students' dialogue practices just to correct the minor grammar error (from '*This is...*' to '*It is...*'), justifies that "pupils are learning to use English for communication with accurate language.*" If a mistake is ignored, the students might learn from the incorrect example and not use it accurately."* This data indicates that they, indeed, were not rigidly convinced by CLT grammar teaching and were guided by their strong inclination towards perfect grammar learning and were rooted in the notion that "grammatical accuracy is perfect learning." --contradictory to CLT. These EL STs' professed justification for an instructional decision based on their actual practices revealed that after actually gaining the experience of teaching in the field, they were inclined to non-CLT grammar.

4.2. Discussion, Recommendation & Implications

    4.2.1 Discussion

    This study enriches an in-depth understanding of student-teachers' personal practical theories as they relate to their instructional decision-making in teaching the English language with CLT concepts, and examines the effect of these PPTs as they progress through their initial internship experiences at schools in the southern provinces of Thailand. Three major findings were uncovered: (1) the overall PPTs of the large sample (n = 26) show a moderate level of preference for CLT; (2) the four cases' actual practices were not guided by their "high" level of PPTs in CLT, whereas the non-CLT PPTs parts were more influential in guiding them to teach overtly on grammar and (3) their underlying notions indicate their perception and PPTs they were personalized around grammatical knowledge. Their justification infers the STs' practices were affected by their PPTs, convincing in grammar as the prerequisite and foundation of English learning towards communicative competence. Only two observations of the two STs show the practices that were equipped with CLT aspects. Her justification is that not correcting grammar mistakes during students' role-playing activities is related to CLT notions. (See * for the CLT-oriented aspects and ❖ for the non-CLT-oriented aspects in Table 3 below).

Table 3: Pre-practicum PPTs, Practices, and Reasons/Justification

	Pre-practicum PPTs	Salient Observed teaching	Major Reasons/Justification
Role of grammar	*** Grammar is a means of communication ability.** *** Indirect teaching of grammar** *** Implicit presentation of grammar**	❖ Direct-teaching of grammar ❖ Over-focus on rules and structure (explicit instruction) ❖ Grammar is taught as an end in itself. ❖ Grammar exercise with no emphasis on function. ❖ Incomprehensible grammar taught in the pre-reading.	❖ Grammar is the foundation of communication ❖ Grammatical accuracy is needed for communication. ❖ Students need grammar for passing an exam. ❖ Learners are unable to produce language if their grammar is poor.
Error Correction	* Delayed correction for fluency of communication. (Interrupting fluency practice is avoided) * Indirect correction for learners' self-correction. * Meaning precedes rules	❖ Explicit, spontaneous correction for grammar over meaning. ❖ Grammar-focused correction on minor errors that caused a breakdown in communication ❖ Incomprehensible correction with grammar-focused. * Meaningful cue for self-correction	❖ Delay in correction causes fossilization of errors. ❖ Learners are unable to correct or learn by themselves. ❖ Promoting a learner's self-correction is time-wasting * Minor correction not matter
Level of CLT	High	Low	Weak

At this point, the EL STs experimented with their initial classroom practices. Since they had gained real-life experience of teaching conditions, they then learned to refine their perception and PPTs to make sense of what the best applicable practices were for each particular context. This study infers that the school prescription of the innovative CLT syllabus and the formal pedagogy knowledge of CLT earned from teacher training college become less powerful when interacting with classroom challenges in the actual workplace. The Thai EL STs' perception was encompassed to a larger extent, with the old pattern of grammar as the prime goal in teaching English. Two points of discussion are to be drawn.

Student-teachers have unclarified 'practical' knowledge about how to apply CLT

The inconsistent PPTs, traditional non-CLT practices, and justification given indicate that the EL STs in this study were not settled in their PPTs and had unclarified knowledge about CLT regarding grammar in particular. Studies in Thailand on classroom instructions in communication-based lessons show evidence of integration of traditional rote-learning, a teacher–dominant approach, and accuracy-focused practices with little evidence of the communicative aspect of activities (e.g., Ketamon, 2016; Kwon, 2017; Phatharawisetphan, 2016). The findings are aligned with Borg (2009) and Littlewood (2014) that indicate teachers lacked the skill of teaching grammar with other skills in integrated ways. The problem that the EL teachers' practices are engulfed with old patterns of GTM is commonly the big debate in EFL studies. Previous studies (e.g., Chanthao, 2018; Kwon; 2017) find Thai EL teachers hold superficial perceptions about language teaching and CLT. Misconceptions about CLT among teachers were a common phenomenon in EFL and also the ESL contexts- where English is used daily for communication (Phipps, 2009). Learners' exposure to real language communication might not be a key indicator for the understanding of the communicative aspects of grammar teaching, as found in previous similar studies, the familiarity with traditional methods and unclarified understanding in CLT (Noom-Ura, 2013). Despite EL STs' positive views about CLT, their negative views about the roles of grammar, error correction, and the

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teacher role of grammar presenter influence their decision-making processes in the classroom. EL STs in this study appeared to be aware of the value of CLT but lacked sufficient *pedagogical content knowledge* or PCK (Shulman, 1987) needed to teach CLT. This condition, hence, impacts an attempt to make change for any pedagogical reform. Thus, understanding student-teachers' adjustment of their personal knowledge in association with educating their formal knowledge of teaching is recommended. Teacher educators are likely to provide further support at an individual level to assist the STs in becoming aware of their deep-rooted knowledge and PPTs, in particular, the ones that do not complement the innovative pedagogy.

Novice teachers' construction of PPTs is inconsistent and needs constructive support.

Findings demonstrate that EL STs ejected their personal theories embedded with CLT tenets and turned their practices into the old pattern of grammar-focused classes. They also held inconsistent PPTs in different sub-aspects – one CLT-based error correction and one non-CLT way of grammar presentation. This implies the incongruence between their theory and practice. It is noteworthy that inconsistent perception was common in novice teachers' thinking systems (Borg, 2009). Teachers' personal theories and practices are known to be sometimes consistent, and inconsistent at other times (Mak, 2011), depending on contextual factors (Johnson, 2009). Inconsistencies between practices and beliefs about teaching are often attributed to situational constraints (Borg & Gholkar, 2020). In Asian and Thai contexts, these inconsistencies were in association with the contextual classroom challenges, in particular, time allocation and students' weak English competence (Noom-Ura, 2013; Teng & Sinwongsuwat, 2015). Moreover, when teachers are faced with a new situation, misinterpretations may occur, and this may lead to resistance to adopting new things (Li, 2013). The EL STs referred to constraints and challenges directly holding conflicting perceptions without noticing inconsistencies in their PPTs-inclining to communicative grammar in one context and discarding communicative grammar in another similar context. Another possible cause relates to the influence of their prior experience of learning (Pajares, 1992). It appears the EL STs in this study mostly learned in the English classes that were equipped with the grammar-translation which are not aligned to CLT; and audio-lingual methods which is a weak CLT pattern (Littlewood, 2014). In this sense, their resistance to adopting an innovative approach may arise because they have gained familiarity with the traditional approach and this is rooted in their pedagogical cognition that may strongly influence their instructional decisions. They would eject the proposed theories along with this process of "learning to teach" if they lacked the positive stimulus given with constructive support (Johnson, 2009). The STs in this study preferred to transmit linguistic knowledge more than facilitate language use due to their accumulation of pre-existing traditional knowledge, not their reconstruction of new innovative tenets. The prompt role of the teacher educators in this situation is to stabilize their mismatched PPTs and bridge the PPT-practice gap.

4.2.2 Recommendation

Similar to research studies in the ESL context (Phipps, 2009) and the Thai EFL context (e.g., Kwon, 2017; Phatharawisetphan, 2016; Tsehay, 2017), this study discovered the difficulties the Thai EL teachers faced in implementing innovative teaching and noticed the overall lack of success of teacher professional development directed at innovative pedagogy. To a certain extent, this study infers that knowledge taught in a university's coursework is not sufficiently well-equipped with the experiential learning of the CLT concept. CLT is accounted as the broad principle that is uneasy to translate into practice and requires reflective real-life training to be skillful in teaching (Richards & Rogers, 2014) Studies in student-teachers' thinking support the conclusion that student-teachers in an innovative arrangement make more progress during teaching practice than student teachers in a traditional arrangement (e.g., Peercy, 2012; Phipps, 2009). Innovative approaches to teacher education are needed. The first recommendation, therefore, proposes a practice-based course to accompany each particular theory-based lesson in the teaching-training program to promote the STs' reflection and reconstruction of their practical theories. Second, by unveiling the hidden practical theories and the underlying notions of instructional decision-making that the STs implicitly hold, teacher educators can raise STs' attentiveness to these and illustrate ways in which related classroom factors may inform pedagogical decisions. This helps STs make sense of their teaching and appraise available options. In some situations, novice teachers are not aware of the underlying reasons for the conflicting cognition they hold (Borg et.al, 2020). Studies have documented

the significant relationship between reflective teacher education and the growth of teachers' PPTs (e.g., Peercy, 2012; Farrell, 2018). Teacher education, therefore, should promote the professional role of reflective practitioners by including activities to encourage STs to reflect on their PPTs and the underlying reasons behind their instructional decisions; and identify aspects of their teaching at odds with their personal theories. This would allow the STs to promote the ability to verbalize and think through what they are doing and understand their thinking (Debreli, 2016) and refine their construction of theory-in-use as a collection of their PPTs.

4.2.3 Implications

The major result of this study points to the gap between teachers' theory and practice. The evidence indicates the inexperienced student-teachers' cognition -PPTs are inconsistent and their practices are not connected with PPTs. Teachers' performance during the practicum is not aligned with the pedagogy reform scheme. For more empirical shreds of evidence, this finding implies an extension of research into experienced or expert teachers to search for associations between levels of experience and the teachers' potential in teaching. Moreover, the study with a similar framework can be extended to include the different groups of teachers, i.e., the teachers whose English learning was equipped with the old-pattern pedagogy and the group of teachers with varied experiences in using English for communication. This is to track the data on how the teachers can adapt their pre-existing cognition and the extent they can articulate their personal theory. To explore more in-depth substantive data to support the understanding of the teachers' thinking and practice, qualitative strategies, that can incorporate the reflective approach, i. e. stimulated-recall strategy and reflective dialogue, are suggested.

5. Conclusion

This study is based on the notion that constructive input to reform teachers' professional development in teaching practice cannot exclude the factor of teachers' development in their personal theory of teaching, in particular; and the cognitive system of education in general. In the area of Thai English language teaching, Communicative Language Teaching is still considered a promising means to promote change in learners' EL ability to accomplish communicative competence. A great challenge confronting teacher education is that Thai EL STs' deep-rooted PPTs are rather related to traditional old-pattern methods and are neither powerful enough to enact instructional change nor promote professional reform. To effectively promote teachers to change innovatively, this study expects that the insights and findings data may inform the stakeholders in English language education, i.e., policymakers, teacher educators, and language teachers who take part in teacher professional development for more innovative strategies of training and preparation that are highly concerned with teachers' cognition on its dynamic development.

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