

Developing an Instructional Innovation Model for Teaching English Tense Structures: A Grounded Theory Study of Teachers' Classroom Practice and Perceptions

Chalerm-sup Karanjakwut^{1,*}, Kamonwan Charunsri¹, Arnantawut Tiang-uan¹, Wapee Kong-in¹, Saisunee Oulis¹ & Sirikanjana Baikham¹

¹English Programme (B.Ed.), Faculty of Education, Bansomdejchaopraya Rajabhat University, Bangkok, Thailand

*Correspondence: English Programme (B.Ed.), Faculty of Education, Bansomdejchaopraya Rajabhat University, Bangkok, Thailand. E-mail: chalerm-sup.ka@bsru.ac.th

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Abstract

Thai EFL learners consistently struggle with English verb tense structures due to fundamental linguistic differences between Thai and English grammar systems, compounded by traditional grammar-translation teaching methods that emphasize rote memorization over meaningful application. Teachers in resource-limited schools lack effective pedagogical frameworks and professional development opportunities to address these persistent challenges in tense instruction. This study aimed to accomplish the following goals: a) identify current pedagogical practices and challenges in teaching English tense structures in small Thai schools, b) examine how teachers implement a newly developed instructional innovation, c) explore teachers' perceptions and experiences of using the innovation, and (d) develop an emergent, replicable teaching model grounded in actual classroom practice. Drawing on constructivist and sociocultural theories, cognitive load theory, and communicative grammar instruction, this study situated instructional innovation as a means to bridge rule-based and meaning-focused approaches in EFL grammar teaching. A grounded theory qualitative design was employed. Four English teachers from resource-limited primary schools participated in pre- and post-training observations, focus groups, and semi-structured interviews. Open, axial, and selective coding of field notes and transcripts generated the instructional model. The study revealed the EPIRIS model—Elicitation of Knowledge; Presentation; Innovation Use; Retention Practice; Interaction; Summary and Assessment—which organizes effective strategies for teaching tense structures with the innovation. Teachers reported increased confidence, student engagement, and memory retention, despite challenges of time management and mixed-ability classes. The model offers a practical roadmap for EFL teachers in similar contexts and informs professional development programs by demonstrating how multimodal, student-centered innovations can be systematically integrated.

Keywords: instructional innovation, English tense structures, instructional model, grounded theory, teacher training

1. Introduction

1.1 Low English Proficiency and Tense Usage Challenges in Thailand's EFL Context

English proficiency has become essential globally, underpinning academic achievement, professional opportunities, and international cooperation (United Nations Thailand, 2025a). Reflecting this global trend, Thailand has prioritized English education within its development policies, aligning closely with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly SDG 4 (Quality Education) and SDG 10 (Reduced Inequalities). SDG 4 underscores inclusive, equitable, and lifelong educational opportunities, whereas SDG 10 addresses the reduction of educational disparities (United Nations Thailand, 2025a, 2025b). Innovations in instructional practices are key components for achieving these goals, as they enhance educational outcomes and provide equitable access to quality education for diverse student populations (Pachava et al., 2025).

However, English teaching in rural Thai schools faces numerous systemic constraints. Teachers often lack professional development opportunities, and instruction is mostly textbook driven with minimal integration of modern pedagogical strategies (UNESCO Bangkok, 2019). Disparities in access to resources and teacher training

limit students' exposure to quality English instruction, widening the urban-rural proficiency gap (Chabundit & Krobsanthia, 2024).

Despite its emphasis in Thailand's education system, English proficiency remains notably low among university Thai learners, particularly concerning verb tense usage (Iamsirak & Phoocharoensil, 2023). Numerous studies in the Thai EFL context have highlighted persistent challenges learners face with verb tenses, mainly because of fundamental differences between Thai and English grammar systems. The Thai language conveys time through contextual or lexical indicators, however, English uses verb conjugations extensively (Stephens & Sanderson, 2021). Consequently, Thai learners often experience difficulty mastering grammatical structures like verb inflections, aspectual distinctions, and auxiliary verbs, resulting in recurrent errors (Iamsirak & Phoocharoensil, 2023; Takahashi & Thumawongsa, 2024).

Tense structures serve as fundamental building blocks in English syntax and discourse. Research shows that poor mastery of tenses leads to communication breakdowns and lower academic performance (Allard & Mizoguchi, 2021). Traditional grammar instruction, often focused on rule memorization, has proven insufficient in promoting long-term understanding or contextual application (Stephens & Sanderson, 2021). Hence, grammar instruction needs to be reimaged to include innovative and learner-centered strategies that support conceptual clarity and practical use.

Recent empirical studies confirm interlingual interference, primarily negative transfer from the Thai language, as a leading cause of verb tense errors among Thai learners (Takahashi & Thumawongsa, 2024). The absence of similar grammatical structures in Thai exacerbates this issue, affecting learners' written and spoken English outputs. Notably, these challenges persist despite years of traditional grammar instruction, underscoring the necessity for innovative pedagogical methods to effectively bridge linguistic gaps (Karanjakwut, 2024).

Pedagogical innovation thus becomes vital to addressing these instructional challenges. Recent research in Thailand has explored learner-centered and innovative instructional methodologies to improve grammatical comprehension. For example, Karanjakwut (2024) developed an outcome-based instructional toolkit focusing specifically on verb tense structures, integrating structured exercises, practical language use activities, and interactive learning techniques. This approach demonstrated effectiveness, with significant improvements in students' understanding and retention of verb tense rules (Karanjakwut, 2024). Similarly, Stephens and Sanderson (2021) introduced a simplified "two-tenses" pedagogical framework, clarifying English tense structures for Thai university learners, yielding substantial improvement in their grammatical accuracy.

Additionally, technological integration into grammar instruction has gained momentum within Thai classrooms. Current students, categorized as Generation Z and Alpha, prefer interactive, multimodal learning environments, prompting educators to leverage digital tools such as mobile applications, online platforms, and gamified grammar exercises. Recent English Language Teaching (ELT) research highlights the positive impact of such technology-enhanced methods on student engagement and grammatical competence, further supporting their adoption in diverse educational contexts (Takahashi & Thumawongsa, 2024).

Beyond enhancing grammar instruction, these innovative approaches align with Thailand's broader objectives under SDG 4 and SDG 10. By adopting pedagogical innovations uniformly across urban and rural contexts, Thailand aims to minimize educational inequalities, ensuring the consistent quality of English education nationwide. Initiatives targeted at rural schools illustrate these efforts, emphasizing equalizing opportunities for students irrespective of their geographic or socioeconomic backgrounds (Chabundit & Krobsanthia, 2024).

Traditional teaching methods have not proved effective, as learners continue to exhibit significant difficulties, particularly with verb tenses, because of linguistic disparities and pedagogical limitations. Innovations such as outcome-based instructional toolkits, simplified grammatical frameworks, and technology-enhanced learning environments demonstrate promising results. Implementing these methods comprehensively can significantly improve learners' grammatical competence and retention, thus contributing meaningfully to the achievement of SDGs 4 and 10. The present study aimed to accomplish the following: a) identify current pedagogical practices and specific challenges faced by Thai teachers in instructing English verb tense structures, b) examine how teachers implement the developed instructional innovation in their classrooms when teaching English tense structures, c) explore teachers' perceptions, experiences, and sense of competence in using the instructional innovation for English tense structures, and d) develop an emergent instructional model for teaching English tense structures using the innovation.

1.2 Pedagogical Skills and Instructional Innovations for Grammar Teaching

Effective grammar instruction demands more than content knowledge—it requires pedagogical content knowledge,

which integrates subject mastery with instructional strategy (Shulman, 1987). Teachers must be skilled in presenting grammar in ways that align with learners' cognitive levels and linguistic backgrounds. Contemporary frameworks such as TPACK (Technological Pedagogical Content Knowledge) underscore the role of digital literacy in modern grammar teaching (Mishra & Koehler, 2006).

Instructional innovation refers to novel strategies, tools, or approaches designed to improve teaching and learning outcomes. In grammar instruction, this includes visual aids, timeline diagrams, mobile apps, and game-based learning platforms (Siri, 2022). These tools promote learner engagement and contextual understanding, and when integrated appropriately, support deeper grammatical comprehension (Takahashi & Thumawongsa, 2024).

1.3 Instructional Innovation, Memory and Retention in Teaching

Research supports the efficacy of using innovations in improving both teaching practices and learning outcomes. For example, Allard and Mizoguchi's (2021) holistic tense framework accelerated English as a second language (ESL) learners' mastery of English verb tenses. In the Thai context, Siri (2022) found that learners using mobile grammar apps showed significant posttest improvement. Such findings affirm that innovation can mitigate the limitations of traditional grammar teaching.

Cognitive load theory provides a foundational framework for designing instructional materials. This theory argues that learning is most effective when cognitive load is minimized and working memory is used efficiently (Sweller, 2016). Supporting theories include Mayer's (2009) cognitive theory of multimedia learning, which promotes dual-channel processing to improve retention.

Instructional innovations, especially those incorporating multimedia, promote memory retention by reducing extraneous load and scaffolding schema development. For example, gamified and visual instructional tools engage learners more actively than traditional instructional methods, thus enhancing attention and long-term retention (Pachava et al., 2025). In teacher training, using hands-on demonstrations and active recall strategies fosters experiential learning and durable pedagogical shifts.

1.4 Empirical Studies

Qualitative studies confirm that sustained teacher development positively influences grammar instruction quality. For example, Karanjakwut (2024) reported significant improvements in Thai teachers' grammar pedagogy after engaging in an outcome-based training programme. Similarly, Chatwirote (2022) demonstrated that concept-based instruction improved both teaching clarity and student outcomes.

While evidence supports the effectiveness of instructional innovation, most studies emphasize student learning outcomes, with limited exploration of how teachers adopt and sustain new methods. Additionally, few studies have addressed the contextual barriers faced by rural teachers in Thailand. This study fills that gap by focusing on qualitative insights from teachers participating in a structured upskilling program that aims to understand how innovation can be sustainably integrated into everyday grammar instruction. Therefore, The present study aimed to 1) identify current pedagogical practices and specific challenges faced by Thai teachers in instructing English verb tense structures, 2) examine how teachers implement the developed instructional innovation in their classrooms when teaching English tense structures, 3) explore teachers' perceptions, experiences, and sense of competence in using the instructional innovation for English tense structures, and 4) develop an emergent instructional model for teaching English tense structures using the innovation.

2. Method

2.1 Research Design

A grounded theory qualitative research design was employed to systematically explore and explain the processes through which teachers implemented instructional innovation in teaching English tense structures. Grounded theory was chosen for its suitability in generating a practical instructional model based on empirical data derived directly from participants' practices and perceptions.

2.2 Participants

The participants consisted of four English teachers from two small-sized primary schools in Ban Phaeo District, Samut Sakhon Province, Thailand. These schools were characterized by limited resources and smaller student populations, aligning with the study's aim to examine instructional innovation in under-resourced educational contexts. All participating teachers were female, held bachelor's degrees in education or English teaching, and had from 5 to 15 years of teaching experience. They were selected purposively based on their voluntary participation in a

teacher upskilling project that focused on innovative grammar teaching strategies.

Prior to the study, the teachers completed a structured 36-hour professional development program specifically designed to introduce and train them in the use of a developed instructional innovation for teaching English tense structures. These 36-hour training lasted six weeks; one week spent six hours. This training included hands-on practice, collaborative lesson planning, and reflective dialogue. At the time of data collection, the teachers were actively applying this innovation in their classrooms with varying levels of confidence and adaptation, making them well-suited for the grounded theory exploration of practical integration and instructional modeling.

2.3 Instruments

Three primary instruments were developed and utilized for data collection.

2.3.1 Pre- and Post-Observation Checklists

These instruments functioned as qualitative field note templates for researchers to document descriptive and reflective observations during classroom teaching. The descriptive section focused on observable behaviors such as how teachers introduced, described, and reinforced English tense structures using the developed innovation, including classroom interactions, instructional materials, and student responses. The reflective section captured the observer's interpretations, questions, and potential insights for analysis. These forms did not follow a structured checklist format but encouraged narrative observation and critical reflection. They were used both before and after the implementation of the innovation, helping the researchers capture shifts in instructional practice, thus directly informing research questions one and two by documenting pedagogical context and transformation.

2.3.2 Focus Groups Interview

This protocol comprised individualized, open-ended questions that explored deeper insights into each teacher's unique experience with the innovation, including their sense of professional growth, confidence, and pedagogical transformation. The interviews provided a private, reflective space to delve into personal narratives and interpretations. These insights supported research questions three and four, particularly in identifying emerging patterns and elements for the final instructional model.

2.4 Data Collection

The data collection was conducted in four phases as follows:

Phase 1: Preobservation

Classroom observations were conducted prior to the teacher training to explore existing pedagogical practices and challenges faced by participants when teaching English tense structures. Using the preobservation forms, researchers recorded descriptive field notes focusing on instructional strategies, student engagement, and classroom dynamics. Reflective notes were added to capture the researchers' interpretations and initial analytical impressions. The data from the observation were collected by the researcher four times for four participants (each participant one time). Each participant was observed once before the training (n=4 observations).

Phase 2: Teacher Training Programme

Teachers participated in a structured 36-hour professional development program during which they were introduced to the developed instructional innovation which the researcher designed and developed it from Karanjakwut's (2024) research results to real playable toolkits. The program included input sessions, collaborative lesson planning, practical demonstrations, and reflective discussions aimed at enhancing teachers' understanding and application of the innovation. This training was conducted by the researcher.

Phase 3: Implementation and Teaching Demonstration

Following the training, teachers implemented the innovation in their real classroom settings. Researchers observed their teaching using postobservation forms, which included descriptive documentation of teaching behaviors, classroom interactions, and innovation-related activities. Reflective sections were completed to analyze how teachers applied the innovation and adapted their instructional methods. In this phase, the recorded video was used for postobservation review. The data from the observation were collected by four different Thai lecturers of English who were given basic information about the research to lessen bias and observer effect occurring during observation. Therefore, their role was just to observe the class and reflect based on the participants' experiences.

Phase 4: Post-observation Review and Focus Groups Interviews

After the classroom implementations, researchers conducted a review of the observation sessions to track any

pedagogical changes or emerging instructional patterns. This review was followed by focus groups interviews, conducted to obtain personal insights into teachers' perceptions, confidence, challenges, and perceived outcomes of using the instructional innovation. These data sources together informed the grounded theory model development. The data from the observation and focus group interview were collected by the researcher.

2.5 Data Analysis

Data analysis followed grounded theory procedures, including the following:

- 1) Open Coding: Transcripts from observations and interviews were analyzed line-by-line to identify initial codes representing practices, perceptions, and challenges.
- 2) Axial Coding: Identified codes were organized into broader categories and subcategories to explore relationships, conditions, and consequences related to implementing the instructional innovation.
- 3) Selective Coding: Categories were integrated around core themes to develop a coherent instructional model. The constant comparative method was used throughout to ensure consistency and validity, leading to the emergence of the final instructional innovation model.

2.6 Ethical Considerations

Ethical integrity was maintained at every stage of the research process. The researchers strictly adhered to established ethical principles in qualitative educational research, particularly those concerning participant autonomy, privacy, and research transparency. Prior to data collection, written informed consent was obtained from only the active participants, outlining the purpose of the study, the voluntary nature of participation, and the right to withdraw at any stage without penalty. Participants were informed that their responses would remain confidential and anonymized, and pseudonyms were assigned to all participants and their schools in all documentation and reporting.

To ensure the credibility and trustworthiness of the data, multiple strategies were implemented. Triangulation was employed by integrating data from various sources—classroom observations and in-depth interviews—which provided a comprehensive view of the phenomena under investigation. Member checking was also conducted; participants were invited to review and validate their interview transcripts and emerging interpretations to ensure accuracy and alignment with their intended meanings. In addition, peer debriefing sessions were held with experienced qualitative researchers who reviewed the coding structure, interpretation of data, and the construction of the emergent model. These practices contributed to the methodological rigor and authenticity of the study, reinforcing the reliability of the grounded theory outcomes.

3. Results

3.1 Current Pedagogical Practices and Challenges in Teaching English Tense Structures

Pre-training classroom observations revealed consistent patterns across all four teachers' instructional approaches. All teachers employed teacher-centred, grammar-focused instruction primarily based on the grammar-translation method. Lessons typically began with formulaic rule presentations using patterns such as "Subject + V2" followed by extensive verb lists displayed on whiteboards or handouts.

Classroom activities consisted predominantly of rote copying, chanting verb forms, and isolated drill exercises. Students copied grammatical rules into notebooks and repeated verb conjugations in unison. Practice activities involved filling in blanks with correct verb forms and translating sentences from Thai to English. Communicative practice or contextual examples were notably absent from observed lessons.

Student engagement levels were consistently low across all observed classes. Participation was limited to a small number of confident learners, typically 2-3 students per class. The majority of students remained silent during lessons. When errors occurred, teachers provided immediate public correction without scaffolding or explanation of the underlying concepts.

Teachers demonstrated limited differentiation strategies despite observable diverse proficiency levels within classes. All students received identical instruction regardless of their current understanding. Grammar contextualization was minimal—examples provided were grammatically accurate but bore no connection to students' daily experiences or interests. Complex tenses such as Present Perfect were introduced without prerequisite knowledge building, leading to visible student confusion and disengagement.

Assessment and feedback practices were restricted. Teachers collected student writing assignments but did not provide formative feedback during class time. No opportunities for real-life application of tense structures were

observed. Additionally, no integration of instructional technology or innovative teaching methods was documented across any of the four classrooms.

3.2 Integration and Implementation of the Instructional Innovation in Teaching English Tense Structures

Post-training classroom observations documented notable shifts in instructional practices as teachers integrated the new instructional innovation. Lessons adopted a more structured format following the Presentation–Practice–Production (PPP) model. Teachers replaced traditional rote drilling with activities such as image-sentence matching exercises and interactive group warm-ups.

Teachers began incorporating real-life scenarios into tense instruction. Observed examples included weekend timeline activities where students described past events, and future job poster exercises where students discussed career aspirations using future tenses. Visual aids became prominent features in lessons, including color-coded verb cards, sentence strips, and timeline diagrams that teachers used to support student understanding and memory.

Classroom interaction patterns showed marked changes. Teachers introduced pair work activities and educational games, with observed examples including charades for demonstrating Present Continuous actions and competitive sentence-building activities. These represented a significant departure from the previously observed teacher-dominated instruction formats.

However, implementation consistency varied among participants. Some teachers occasionally reverted to traditional rule explanation methods when time pressure mounted or when facing student confusion. Several instances were observed where teachers skipped planned student production activities due to lesson time constraints. Feedback delivery remained inconsistent, with some teachers continuing to rely on silent correction methods rather than interactive error correction techniques.

3.3 Teachers' Perceptions and Experiences in Using the Instructional Innovation

Focus groups interviews revealed substantial shifts in teacher perspectives following the training programme. All four teachers described their pre-training approaches as heavily focused on rule explanation and exam preparation. Teacher B stated: "I used to teach grammar for tests. Now I see the importance of student understanding and real-life application." After the training, teachers reported adopting meaning-centered instructional approaches. Teacher A explained:

"The training helped me realise I was focusing too much on rules and forms. Now, I try to link the tenses to everyday activities and use visual aids." This shift toward contextual teaching was reported by all participants.

Teachers described implementing concrete changes in their classroom practice. Teacher C reported: "I created sentence strips and had students build sentences like puzzles. They liked the hands-on approach." Teacher D added: "I added storytelling and role play. Students created short dialogues using different tenses." All teachers mentioned incorporating more interactive elements into their lessons.

Confidence levels increased progressively as teachers gained experience with the innovation. Teacher A reflected:

"At first, I was unsure, but after two or three lessons, I felt more confident. Seeing students respond positively boosted my motivation." Similar confidence growth was reported by all participants.

Despite positive changes, teachers identified persistent challenges. Time management emerged as a primary concern, with Teacher D noting: "Timing is an issue. Sometimes I can't finish all steps. I plan more tightly now." Material availability also presented difficulties. Teacher C stated: "I lacked some materials. I reused items from the workshop and made some on my own."

All teachers observed improvements in student outcomes. Teacher B reported: "Students enjoyed activities more and remembered structures longer. One even used Past Perfect correctly in a story!" Teacher A added: "Yes, students remember the tenses better when they use them in games or personal sentences. They're less afraid of making mistakes."

When discussing model development, teachers emphasized the need for clear, replicable structures. Teacher D summarized: "It should be flexible but clear: warm-up, present the tense, use examples, practice together, and let students create." Teacher A recommended: "a structure that starts with something students already know, shows clear steps, and allows time for practice and creativity."

3.4 Emergent Model of Instructional Innovation for English Tense Structures

Drawing on open, axial, and selective coding of the post-observation data, six core teaching steps emerged across all four classrooms. These steps form the Instructional Innovation Model—a practical, replicable framework for teaching English tense structures with the developed toolkit and interactive techniques.

3.4.1 Open Coding

Through an iterative grounded theory analysis of post-observation field notes and interview transcripts, a series of initial codes emerged that captured the essence of how teachers enacted the instructional innovation. During open coding, researchers identified over eighty discrete actions and strategies—ranging from deliberate group arrangements (mixed-gender clusters, circle seating) and varied warm-up techniques (recalling prior lessons, L1–L2 comparisons, rhythmic clapping) to the use of visual and manipulative tools (color-coded verb blocks, hierarchical flowcharts) and guided construction activities (hands-on block-building, step-by-step mapping). Codes also reflected collaborative interactions (peer scaffolding, turn-taking), gamification elements (timed competitions, mobile quizzes), ongoing feedback and scaffolding (teacher prompts, corrective comparison), and structured summary and assessment tasks (oral recall, digital quizzes).

3.4.2 Axial Coding

During axial coding, these codes coalesced into the following three core categories: contextual engagement, which encompassed activities that activated prior knowledge and leveraged classroom layout to foster interaction; multi-modal presentation and practice, referring to the integration of manipulatives and visual organizers alongside scaffolded, hands-on tasks; and interactive reinforcement and reflection, characterized by gamified group challenges, peer and teacher feedback loops, and end-of-lesson consolidation. Each category revealed vital relationships—contextual warm-ups primed students for engagement, which in turn enhanced the efficacy of multimodal practice, ultimately leading to deeper consolidation through interactive reinforcement.

3.4.3 Selective Coding and Model Development

Finally, selective coding integrated these categories around the core process of “context to construction to consolidation,” giving rise to the following sequential six-step instructional innovation model: a) contextualized warm-up, b) clear visual presentation, c) hands-on construction, d) scaffolded practice, e) interactive reinforcement, and g) reflective summary and assessment. This model encapsulates how teachers can systematically guide students from activation of existing schemas through concrete manipulation of tense structures to long-term retention via competitive and reflective tasks. By grounding each step in observed practice and teacher reflection, the model offers a replicable framework for enhancing English tense instruction in resource-constrained, small-school settings.

Integrating these categories around the core process, “From Context to Construction to Consolidation,” yields six sequential steps called the EPIRIS Model shown in Table 1:

Table 1. Six Sequential Steps of the EPIRIS Model

Step	Description
Elicitation of Knowledge	Activate prior knowledge via L1–L2 comparison or quick recall of foundational verbs, focusing attention and purpose.
Presentation	State lesson objectives; present tense formula using flowcharts or slides, linking back to warm-up context.
Innovation Use	Distribute color-coded word blocks; guide students to physically assemble subject-verb sequences in small groups.
Retention Practice	Provide structured support—teacher prompts, reference sheets—then gradually remove aids as students gain confidence.
Interaction	Organize time-bound group competitions (e.g., bell-rings, digital quizzes) to boost engagement, collaboration, and retrieval practice.
Summary and Assessment	Conclude with targeted recall (oral quizzes, written tasks), peer-teacher feedback, and link back to real-world use.

4. Discussion

4.1 Traditional Pedagogical Practices and Their Limitations

The observed teacher-centered, grammar-translation approaches align with documented patterns in Thai EFL instruction, reflecting a focus on memorization over meaningful use (Saengboon et al., 2022; Darasawang, 2007). The predominance of rote copying, chanting, and isolated drills confirms Watcharakorn's (2018) assertion that such methods often result in superficial grammatical knowledge without functional application. The low student engagement and limited participation observed corroborate findings on learner anxiety in Thai EFL contexts, where public correction and lack of scaffolding discourage interaction (Tiang-uan, 2025).

The absence of differentiation strategies and minimal contextual application of grammar reflect systemic issues identified in under-resourced schools with limited professional development opportunities (Darasawang, 2007). The observed lack of technology integration and innovative methods demonstrates gaps in teacher readiness and resource access that have been documented in similar educational settings (Saengboon et al., 2022).

4.2 Effectiveness of Instructional Innovation Implementation

The documented shifts toward structured PPP model implementation and student-centered activities demonstrate meaningful pedagogical transformation. The integration of real-life scenarios and visual aids supports cognitive load theory principles (Sweller, 1994), suggesting that the innovation successfully reduced extraneous cognitive burden while enhancing meaningful learning. The increased use of pair work and interactive games represents alignment with task-based learning principles (Willis & Willis, 2007) and communicative approaches advocated by contemporary EFL methodology.

However, the observed inconsistencies in implementation reflect the complex nature of educational change. The tendency for some teachers to revert to traditional methods under pressure supports Wedell's (2009) observation that teacher beliefs and contextual constraints significantly influence innovation adoption. The persistent challenges with time management and assessment alignment reinforce Noom-ura's (2013) findings about assessment-driven teaching pressures in Thai educational contexts.

4.3 Teacher Transformation and Professional Growth

The reported shift from test-focused to meaning-centered instruction represents a fundamental change in pedagogical philosophy, echoing Borg's (2015) and Nunan's (2003) advocacy for communicative, context-based grammar teaching. The progressive increase in teacher confidence supports Fullan's (2007) assertion that practical experience and observable success are critical factors in sustaining educational change.

The teachers' emphasis on hands-on approaches and storytelling demonstrates alignment with constructivist learning principles and sociocultural theories that emphasize active knowledge construction (Bruner, 1966; Vygotsky, 1978). The reported improvements in student engagement and retention validate cognitive load theory's emphasis on multimodal, task-based learning for memory enhancement (Sweller, 1994, 2016).

The adaptive strategies teachers developed in response to material shortages and timing constraints illustrate the situated nature of innovation adoption, supporting Wedell's (2009) framework for understanding educational change in diverse contexts.

4.4 Theoretical Contribution of the EPIRIS Model

The emergent EPIRIS model represents a grounded theoretical contribution that bridges rule-based and meaning-focused approaches in EFL grammar instruction. The model's foundation in actual classroom practice and teacher reflection provides empirical validation for constructivist and sociocultural learning theories while demonstrating practical application of cognitive load theory principles.

The sequential structure from Elicitation through Summary and Assessment offers a replicable framework that addresses the documented challenges in Thai EFL contexts while remaining flexible enough for adaptation to diverse teaching situations. This model enriches existing pedagogical frameworks by demonstrating how multimodal, student-centered innovations can be systematically integrated into traditional educational settings.

The model's grounding in teacher practice and perception provides a unique perspective on innovation adoption, contributing to understanding of how instructional changes become assimilated into everyday teaching practice in resource-constrained environments.

5. Limitation and Recommendation

This study acknowledges several limitations that may affect the transferability of findings. First, the small sample size of four teachers from two primary schools in a single district limits the generalizability of the EPIRIS model to broader educational contexts. The study's focus on resource-limited rural schools may not reflect the experiences of teachers in well-equipped urban institutions, and the exclusive participation of female teachers may not capture diverse gender perspectives on innovation adoption. Additionally, the research examined only short-term implementation effects without exploring long-term sustainability or measuring actual student learning outcomes, relying instead on teacher perceptions of student improvement. The cultural and linguistic specificity of the Thai EFL context may limit the model's applicability to other ESL/EFL settings with different language transfer challenges.

For future research and implication, the authors recommend including longitudinal data on student performance to strengthen the effectiveness of using instructional innovation to teach verb tense structures, considering embedding the model into digital or blended learning platforms, and providing deeper reflection on teacher cognition and belief systems influencing adoption.

6. Conclusion

In this study, we set out to a) identify existing pedagogical practices and challenges in teaching English tense structures, b) examine how teachers implemented a newly developed instructional innovation, c) explore teachers' perceptions and experiences with that innovation, and d) develop a grounded, practical teaching model. Through systematic classroom observations and in-depth interviews—analyzed via open, axial, and selective coding—we distilled a six-step instructional innovation model. Teachers moved from elicitation of knowledge, through presentation and innovation use, into retention practice and interaction, and finally summary.

These findings make two key contributions. First, they empirically demonstrate how teachers in resource-limited, small-school contexts can adopt learner-centered, multimodal strategies—bridging the divide between traditional grammar-translation methods and communicative, constructivist approaches. Second, by grounding each step in actual teacher practice and reflection, the model provides a replicable framework that aligns with cognitive load theory, sociocultural scaffolding, and task-based learning principles. Practically, this model offers teachers a clear roadmap for upskilling and classroom implementation; theoretically, it enriches our understanding of how instructional innovations become assimilated into everyday teaching. Future researchers might explore long-term impacts on student proficiency and extend the model to larger or more diverse educational settings.

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